



# The European Reference Framework Online for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and Neglect

- Background, Good Practices and Recommendations -

# Colophon

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# Introduction

Over the last two decades, the issue of elder abuse has been receiving increasing attention within the context of research, policy and practice. A report issued by WHO<sup>1</sup>/Europe in June 2011 indicated that each year, 2.7% (4 million) of all people aged 60 years or older experience physical abuse, 19.4 % (29 million) experience mental abuse, 3.8 % (6 million) experience financial abuse and 0.7 % (1 million) experience sexual abuse.

Elder abuse is increasingly being recognised as a major societal problem. This problem is likely to increase, given the rapidly ageing population of the Member States. At the international level, policymakers and field workers have expressed concern about this problem and have united to improve their better understanding of elder abuse and the methods required to prevent it.

## 1.1. The EUROPEAN project

The European Reference Framework Online for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and Neglect Project (EuROPEAN) is being carried out under the European Commission's Call for a Pilot Project on Preventing Elder Abuse (VP/2009/014).

The project involves partners from Austria (EURAG Austria), the Czech Republic (Život 90), Greece (KMOP), Ireland (Age Action Ireland), Italy (Anziani e Non Solo), the Netherlands (ANBO and MOVISIE), Poland (Fundacja JA KOBIEȚA), Slovenia (ZDUS) and Slovakia (Fórum pre pomoc starším – národná sieť).

It is coordinated by ANBO in the Netherlands.

The specific objective of the project is to develop a European Reference Framework for the prevention of elder abuse. The project's interactive online platform will link experts and stakeholders from

all Member States, thereby encouraging them to discuss, contribute and draw upon good practices with regard to policy measures aimed at preventing elder abuse. Policymakers can use the reference framework to improve and extend existing measures for the prevention of elder abuse and to design new policies when needed.

## 1.2. Results of the project

The main results of the EuROPEAN project are as follows.

- The website [www.preventelderabuse.eu](http://www.preventelderabuse.eu). This online platform provides information on elder abuse within the context of European policy and research, as well as about the project, and it connects relevant policymakers, experts and stakeholders.
- The Background and Position Paper *Elder Abuse in Europe*, published in June 2010. This document provides deeper insight into the phenomenon of elder abuse and the context at the international level.
- National reports on the specific social and cultural backgrounds of elder abuse, along with good practices for the prevention of elder abuse, in each of the nine participating countries. These reports were published online in early 2011.
- A database of good practices for the prevention of elder abuse (in English, online)
- A Reference Framework (this report) containing the results and recommendations of the project (translated into nine different languages). This report is intended for dissemination amongst national and international policymakers, stakeholders and experts

“Elder abuse is increasingly being recognised as a major societal problem”



sisting of 11 open-ended questions was developed by MOV-ISIE<sup>2</sup>, discussed in the steering group and placed on the website in January 2010. The survey investigates the ways in which elder abuse is perceived, recognised, prevented and addressed in the participating countries. All nine of the partner organisations gathered information by asking or interviewing policymakers, stakeholders, experts, researchers, practitioners, public attorneys, advocacy and interest groups in their countries in order to complete the questionnaire. Seventy eight completed questionnaires were received.

## 1.3. Methods used in the project

In order to develop and write the Background and Position Paper, it was necessary to gather relevant information from the countries participating in the project. A semi-structured questionnaire con-

In analysing the large amount of information, MOV-ISIE focused primarily on the most important aspects involved in improving the understanding of elder abuse: Which aspects are advanced by the respondents? How can they be ordered? Which similarities and differences can be identified? The Background

2 The knowledge institute involved in the project



and Position Paper examined commonalities between the participating countries in order to create a European entity.

To deepen the information gathered in the Background and Position Paper, MOVISIE developed a model for the National Background Research and the Good Practices. The nine partner organisations answered five questions regarding the social and cultural backgrounds of elder abuse in their countries (e.g.

definition, forms, risk and protective factors, difference between intended and unintended elder abuse and theories for explaining elder abuse). They also used a descriptive matrix to provide examples of good practices. In addition, each partner organisation conducted a focus group (with a panel of experts), in which the responses regarding national background, good practices and three cases of elder abuse were discussed. The results of each focus group discussion were published in a 'National Report' containing national background and good practices. These reports were placed on the website in the first half of 2011.

In preparation for the European Reference Framework, each partner organisation also classified its own good practices and provided additional information about national cultural aspects and current national policies. This input is available online as a supplement to this report ([www.preventelderabuse.eu](http://www.preventelderabuse.eu)).

The methods used to gather the data generated a considerable body of practical qualitative information that can serve as a source of inspiration, although it should not be treated as results from scientific research.

## 1.4. Finally

The results of this project constitute a new step in the creation of a body of work that is necessary in order to improve the ways in which elder abuse is understood and tackled by professionals and volunteers in practice and by policymakers, both national and international.

This report challenges experts and policymakers to use the results and recommendations and to cooperate in building a social and legal structure that minimises the risk that older people will become victims of abuse, as mentioned by WHO and INPEA<sup>3</sup> (2002): *'Older people do not want more than others; they want equality – a human right'*.





# Background

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This chapter contains an overview of the national input from each country involved, complemented with the results of discussions conducted within the steering group of the project.

## 2.1. Elder abuse

### Definition

The World Health Organization's definition of elder abuse is widely used:

Elder abuse is 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.

Of the countries participating in this project, only Ireland<sup>4</sup> and the Netherlands<sup>5</sup> have their own national definitions. The Irish definition includes violation of fundamental rights of older people, and the Dutch definition emphasises the relationship between victim and offender.

Austria, the Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia have no specific national definitions. In these countries, elder abuse is included under more general definitions, such as:

- domestic violence (Czech Republic, Italy, Poland and Slovenia)
- abuse, not only of older people, but also of children and women (Czech Republic, Italy and Slovakia)
- discrimination (Slovakia)

4 Protecting our Future, 2002

5 Comijs, 1996

The partners involved in the project believe that the use of such general definitions carries a risk that relevant forms of abuse will be excluded. For example, addressing elder abuse only within the context of domestic violence neglects other settings in which abuse is likely to occur (e.g. residential care facilities). Elder abuse can happen anywhere. The content of the terms also varies from county to country. For example, in Ireland, domestic violence is perceived in the context of violence between partners, while other countries understand it as any form of violence that takes place within the home.

Another finding is that the definition also depends on the background of the stakeholder and the academic discipline from which the phenomenon is viewed.

Within the project's steering group, discussion arose concerning the possibility of adopting the WHO definition. The following comments were stated by partners.

1. In case of abuse, should there necessarily be an expectation of trust? There is also abuse by strangers. In this case, the victim has no expectation of trust regarding the offender. For example, consider abuse on the street, at the door or by phone or post (Austria, Czech Republic, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia).
2. In case of abuse, should there necessarily be an offender? There can be abuse without an offender, as in the case of self-neglect (Czech Republic).
3. Do we speak of abuse only when there is harm? There is also abuse that is likely to cause harm or distress, even if it does not directly cause harm or distress. In these cases, the attempted abuse can have consequences for the victim in terms of the perception of safety (Italy).
4. Who exactly is an 'older person'? In many cases, elder abuse is less a matter of a specific age as it is a matter of a specific condition, which is more related to dependency and vulnerability (Ireland and Italy).
5. Is a single act enough to be considered abuse? A single act is not sufficient. It must be repeated and escalating (Czech Republic)
6. Does abuse occur only at the level of the individual? Other levels or concepts of violence are possible as well, including cultural and structural abuse (Austria)
7. Shouldn't the violation of civil and human rights be included in the definition as well? (Ireland)

In the national focus groups, participants were asked to rank the three aspects that they considered most relevant to the definition of elder abuse. Although this exercise failed to produce consensus, the participants did agree that the new definition should definitely refer to 'lack of action' and 'unintentional action'.

The participants were not able to frame a proposal for a new, shared, definition.

We advise each member state to discuss the definition without expecting consensus. It is important to remember that discussion concerning the definition of elder abuse can enhance the recognition of the issue and generate national support for breaking the taboo on talking about elder abuse.

For Europe, we advise the adoption of the WHO definition, which is sufficient, albeit imperfect.

### Types of elder abuse

There was considerable discussion between the project partners regarding the types of abuse addressed in the questionnaire. In the Netherlands and Ireland, self-neglect is not recognised as a form of elder abuse. There was also discussion concerning institutional abuse.<sup>6</sup>

The model that was used in the questionnaire for national research distinguishes the following types of elder abuse:

- a. physical
- b. psychological (including emotional, mental, verbal abuse)

<sup>6</sup> This refers to residential care facilities / homes. Institutional abuse is therefore difficult to distinguish from the other forms, as it can occur in cross relation with other forms.



- c. neglect
- d. financial/material
- e. sexual
- f. self-neglect
- g. discrimination
- h. institutional

Participants in the national focus groups were asked to list the most commonly recognised types of elder abuse. There was considerable difference between the countries regarding the level of recognition of the different forms of elder abuse. This difference is probably due to cultural and economic differences between the countries. However, they considered physical abuse the most widely recognised, as it is visible and able to be proven. All of the participants agreed that psychological abuse is less visible, although it may be more common and it often escalates into physical abuse.

Five countries (Czech Republic, Greece, Ireland, Italy and Slovenia) also placed emphasis on financial / material abuse. This could be explained by the visibility of this form. But such visibility does not explain why other countries ranked it as less recognised. Another possible explanation is that financial / material abuse is more relevant in countries with lower economic prosperity, although it is known that such abuse is also present in countries with higher economic prosperity and within all social-economic groups. Financial abuse can also be linked to other social-cultural differences, including fund-raising fraud and the digitalisation of financial transactions. Three countries (Greece, Ireland, Slovakia) placed emphasis on institutional abuse.

Little systematic information is available regarding the prevalence of the various types of elder abuse in the different countries, as reporting and research information is scarce in this regard. We are nonetheless convinced that major differences exist between countries. In all countries, specific registration systems appear to be insufficient to gather reliable data at the national level.

### Theories on elder abuse

Various complementary theories can be used to explain elder abuse. Seven of these theories are mentioned in the first document of the project (the Background and Position Paper). Each country had discussed these theories and identified which were being used effectively. The outcomes varied widely.

Theories	Use
Individual Factors	Used primarily in the Czech Republic, Ireland and Italy
Family Systems	Used primarily in Poland and Slovakia
Individual frustration and stressful structural circumstances	Used primarily in Greece
Societal developments	Less recognised by all
Dignity	Less recognised by all
Violence as a inter-generational pattern	Less recognised by all
Power and gender	Less recognised by all

### Risk and protective factors with regard to elder abuse

In the Background and Position Paper, we also mentioned many risk and protective factors with regard to elder abuse. The paper lists a total of 27 risk factors and 22 protective factors. With regard to both risk and protection, factors are related to the following groups:

- victims
- offenders
- systems of family relationships
- institutions
- community / society.

We asked the countries to identify and rank the ten most important factors. Although there were clear differences amongst these responses as well, they also revealed a number of striking similarities.

### Risk factors

The countries differed widely in the risk factors that they identified as most important.

For example, Slovenia identified ‘dysfunctional family relationships’ as the most important factor, while Ireland identified ‘social isolation’, the Netherlands identified ‘overburdened carers’ and Poland identified ‘rapid population ageing’. These factors were not shared broadly by all countries.

All of the countries nonetheless placed the following risk factors in the top 10.

- ‘Increasing dependence on care or on financial, physical or emotional support’ (relevant to victims)
- ‘Overburdened, stressed or overwhelmed carers’ (relevant to offenders)

The following factors were also identified as important:

- ‘Social isolation’ (relevant to victims);
- ‘Lack of formal recognition or legal definition of elder abuse’ (relevant to community/society).

### Protective factors

The participating countries also differed in their identification of protective factors.

For example, the Netherlands and Italy identified the presence of ‘a social network’ as the most important protective factor (for victims). Greece identified ‘appropriate assistance, counselling’ (for victims), the Czech Republic identified ‘reduction of stress

factors’ (for offenders), Ireland identified ‘education, knowledge and skills concerning sensitivity to signals, discussing abuse and interventions’ (for institutions) and Slovenia identified ‘legislation and legal measures, such as restraining orders, mandatory reporting, leadership and mentoring’ (community/society). These factors were not shared broadly by all countries.

All of the countries nonetheless placed the following protective factor in the top 10.

- ‘Legislation and legal measures, such as restraining orders, mandatory reporting, leadership and mentoring.’ (relevant to community/society)

The following factors were also identified as important:

- ‘A social network’ (relevant to victims)
- ‘Raising public awareness’ (relevant to community/society).

An important step in establishing a national policy for the prevention of elder abuse involves the analysis of risk and protective factors at the national level. Such analysis can provide an effective focus for the measures to be taken.

## 2.2. Social and cultural aspects

In the above sections, we identified many differences between countries, most of which can be explained by social and cultural differences. The following are key elements in this regard.

### Stereotyping as a breeding ground for abuse

Ageing is a subject of stereotyping. Older people are considered as no longer productive. In the case of declining health, they are characterized as a financial burden, due to the costs of care. Several of the project partners (e.g. Ireland and Austria) even referred to discrimination against older people in their countries, using the term of ‘ageism’, particularly within the context of the labour market.

Although the form and prevalence of negative stereotyping differs from country to country, it provides a breeding ground for

abuse of some type in all countries. Changing such images will pose a major challenge, but doing so is the first step in preventing elder abuse.

Positive images of older people can help to neutralise negative perceptions. Older people can also be seen:

- as our collective memory and wisdom
- as an option for childcare in the family, allowing parents to work outside the home
- as volunteers in community development and charity
- as consumers: older people in good health and economic conditions are enjoying a third stage of life.
- as workers: older people are increasingly choosing not to discontinue their paid employment.
- as clients for professional carers, thus creating employment

These positive images can be enhanced as the empowerment and participation of older people increases.

Countering negative stereotyping must begin at the state level by ending alarmist portrayals of the growing number of older people as a group that will pose increasing costs to society. Instead, governments should emphasise the profitability of older people for society. While discussions about pension systems underline the negative stereotyping by referring to the alarming increase in the number of older people as recipients of pension, they neglect the fact that older people have worked hard to build up society and to save for their own pension.

The negative stereotyping of older people can also contribute to a low self-esteem. The general impression that older people are a burden can cause older individuals to feel as if they are a burden for everybody. As this repression becomes internalised, they may try to demonstrate loyalty to those upon whom they are dependent, and this could make them vulnerable. Victims of abuse do not always

recognise themselves as victims, especially in cases in which a family member is the offender.

### Role of the family

The role of the families in the care of older people varies considerably across countries. In general, we identified models in which care tends to be based largely upon the family (in Southern and Eastern European countries) and others in which households tend to receive more support from professional social services.

The lack of public support and excessive reliance upon families to provide care can contribute to the environment of elder abuse. Although the home is usually considered a safe place for older people, dysfunctional family relationships, overburdened home carers or financial problems can lead to abuse. As observed by an expert from Slovenia, such abuse will be *'hidden behind the four walls'*. This situation can be exacerbated by social isolation and lack of community supervision. Especially in rural areas, this type of abuse is amongst the hardest to detect.

The role of the traditional family is also diminishing. In an increasing number of cases, older people are excluded by their families, living alone and lonely. That increases their risk of becoming victims of abuse. In addition, the separation of families due to migration for economic reasons can lead to smaller households in which carers can easily become overwhelmed. Increasing stress within the family can thus increase the incidence of violence against older people.

Isolation, unemployment, lower education and/or alcoholism or drug abuse are likely to increase the stress even further and make the situations more difficult to address.

### Role of the state

When elder abuse occurs within the family, the state must consider its role in this private sphere. This is especially important in situations involving

**"The role of the traditional family is also diminishing. That increases their risk of becoming victims of abuse"**

vulnerable people who cannot stand up for themselves. In some countries, the influence of the state ends at the threshold of the home, while other countries allow for the protection of victims of domestic violence. The latter countries recognise that abuse is a violation of civil and human rights and therefore a matter for the state. Civil and human rights do not end at the threshold of the home. Effective efforts to combat elder abuse require the recognition that private violence is a public affair. For example, in 2002, the government in the Netherlands clearly stated that domestic violence is a public and societal problem that must be addressed and combated by the government in cooperation with police, law enforcement, support services and other professionals.

The debate concerning the role of the state includes another issue as well. The internal market must be allowed to work, and considerable private responsibility is needed. Volunteer and home carers (especially women) are taking over jobs from professionals in this area. The increasing number of volunteers, however, can be an additional risk factor. As noted by an expert in Ireland, this can have additional effects:

*'If family is going to do the State's job, the State is not going to police the family'.*

In most of the countries, there is also a need to reduce public budgets due to the current economic and financial crisis. Such reductions could decrease the quality of care and care facilities by reducing staff. In case of residential care facilities the accessibility is coming under pressure too. For vulnerable older people who can no longer remain in their own homes the option to move to residential care facilities may become too expensive.

In family settings, family members who care for vulnerable older people need professional support, but such support has also come under pressure. If this pressure becomes too great, professionals and family carers can become overburdened, thereby placing older people at greater risk of abuse (whether intentional or unintentional).

## Organisation of care

In each country, the organisation of care is different. In some countries, the number of older people living in residential care facilities is greater than it is in other countries. This depends on the availability and accessibility of homes for the elderly, as well as on different views regarding the 'benefits' of living at home as long as possible. Preventing elder abuse is necessary, but not always developed, in both settings.

Older people (whether living at home or in residential care facilities) have a right to sufficient professional support at a sufficient level of quality, although this is not the case in all countries. In some countries (e.g. Poland), there are no quality standards or protocols at all.

Countries also differ widely with regard to the skills, effectiveness and independent control of the professionals (e.g. general practitioners, nurses, family carers, physical therapists, psychological advisors or social workers). By noticing abuse, professionals on the front lines of care play a crucial role in the prevention of elder abuse.

## Ethnic minorities

The information obtained in this project provided no evidence regarding ethnic aspects of elder abuse. Only one good practice was identified: one Dutch study indicates that the phenomenon itself is the same, but the taboo on discussing elder abuse tends to be greater amongst ethnic minorities, as they prefer to keep it inside their own community. The issue of elder abuse, however, is also experienced and treated differently within each ethnic group. Participants from the Czech Republic referred to the Roma community. Because contact with this community is difficult, and because they tend not to receive care in institutions, it is difficult to discover if or how elder abuse exists within the Roma community. Participants from Italy mentioned another point with regard to ethnicity, referring to risk factors involving migrant carers (badante) as potential offenders. This risk is exacerbated by the difficult living circumstances of these carers, due to their lack of status and rights, as well as their language problems.



Aside from these points, we know little about elder abuse amongst ethnic minorities. This issue clearly deserves additional attention and research in the future.

### 2.3. Current national policy

The project partners described their current national policies concerning elder abuse. This section provides a summary of the widely varying national situations.

#### Legislation

None of the countries involved has specific legislation concerning elder abuse; elder abuse is addressed in broader general legislation (e.g. domestic violence or criminal law). In practice, therefore, various laws can be used, although different aspects of elder abuse are treated by different laws. In some cases, it is not even obvious whether elder abuse is covered by a specific law. This could be due to a lack of a coherent approach or to ignorance of laws and regulations on the part of the public or even key individuals. It is therefore very important to communicate the rules that already exist.

The countries involved in this project agreed about the need for specific legislation regarding elder abuse, which will be translated into additional details and for several levels and settings. The absence of legislation implies the absence of rights and duties and the scale of punishment to use by violations, but also of standards or values described in public as a reference for acting. An adequate legal framework would make it possible to intervene in all settings, including the family setting.

#### National policy

National policy is more than simply legislation. There is a need for infrastructure, agreements, measures, protocols, standards, networking, regulation and monitoring (for an overview, see Section 4.1). The development of specific national policies regarding elder abuse varies between countries. For example, in Italy, there are only local activities, while other countries (e.g. Ireland) have national policies.

#### National programmes

Only three countries have specific national programmes regarding elder abuse.

In 2002, *Ireland* published a document entitled 'Protecting our Future', which was adopted as national policy by the Minister for Older People. It provided recommendations regarding the policies and procedures that should be implemented. The progress



in implementing the recommendations in 'Protecting our Future' was reviewed in 2009. This review revealed that recommendations regarding the dedicated elder-abuse structures are working well, but gaps were identified in the connection between these structure and broader health policy and inter-agency operations.

Two other countries, Austria and the Netherlands, have launched national programmes more recently.

In *Austria*, an action plan under leadership of the Federal Ministry of Interior ('Alliance against Violence', 2010) contains a specific section on the topic of elder abuse. The aim of the alliance is to improve the linkages amongst all actors who are actively engaged in the prevention of abuse. The alliance considers political, law-enforcement, societal, economic and scientific aspects with the goal of developing a common approach. Packages of cross-departmental measures will be coordinated, best practices will be gathered and joint evaluation will be conducted.

In the *Netherlands*, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport has assumed responsibility for specifying a national action plan on elder abuse ('Seniors in good hands', April 2011). The action plan considers measures for improving prevention (identification

and reporting), victim support and firm action towards offenders, all to be achieved through the joint efforts of the government, municipalities and professional organisations.

The table below provides a concise comparison of the structural characteristics of these policies.

Ireland	Austria	Netherlands
Specific to elder abuse	General to violence, although elder abuse is included	Specific to elder abuse
One department	Cross-departmental	One department
Executive: Health and Social care services	Alliance of stakeholders, including government	National government as director Municipalities share responsibility as well.



Ireland, Austria and the Netherlands have developed their own ways of combating elder abuse. Other countries could take inspiration from these examples.

Slovenia is in the final stages of preparing a very important document ('The strategy for quality aging, solidarity and harmony for all generations in Slovenia for the period from 2011- 2020'), which will address the elderly in much more comprehensive manner. This document also covers the issue of elder abuse. Slovakia is working to develop a national programme regarding elder abuse too.



# Good Practices

## 3.1. Procedures

A good practice is an activity that has proven effective in the prevention of elder abuse. The practices presented below were identified by the project partners within their national contexts. Because each project partner decided independently whether it would be interesting to provide information for international exchange, there was no international selection.

If a good practice is mentioned by one country, that does not mean that the other countries had no similar practices. On the contrary, although awareness campaigns, help lines and quality standards exist in multiple countries, only the description of one country is shown.

Within the EuROPEAN project, 55 good practices were gathered and described in National Reports. The examples provided by each country were subsequently discussed in the steering group, which decided to tighten the criteria. Eventually, 40 examples were selected for entry into a database available on the project website and included in this report. These practices met the following criteria:

1. elder abuse is specifically addressed in the content.
2. the practice is transmissible to other organisations.
3. the practice has been used for more than two years and by at least two organisations.
4. the practice is documented.

Practices addressed more general issues or involved single, unrepeatable practices that had been applied by only one organisation were excluded. The adoption of these criteria unfortunately eliminated all of the good practices submitted by Poland.

3.

## Senior Academy (Czech Republic)

The Senior Academy involves seminars aimed at helping older people to protect themselves from criminal offences.

Participants receive small gifts (e.g. instructions, measures, leaflets, stamps) to remind them of their motivation to participate.

The seminars speak publicly about:

- the specific vulnerability of older people to some kind of crime, as well as offers of assistance
- protection: how it can be accomplished, where it can be found and what can be done
- the nature of those crimes, in order to stress that it is not normal

Operated by: the Prague police force, with cooperation from the Magistrate of Prague

The online database is a collection of various types and sizes of samples, depending upon the situation in each country. It is obvious that no good practice will be suitable by use in every organisation and in every country. Good practices are not 'one size fits all'; they must be customised to each setting.

The good practices listed in the database could provide a source of inspiration within the countries in which they were identified. Local initiatives could be spread to the regional or national levels, or they could be applied to other settings. Such dissemination constitutes the beginning of the process of developing national policies for combating elder abuse.

At the same time, the international exchange of good practices can be quite useful as well, as such practices could inspire policymakers to find new and effective approaches for combating elder abuse. The applicability of each good practice must be explored and new decisions must be made before choosing to pursue a particular strategy.

"Good practices are not 'one size fits all'; they must be customised to each setting."

## 3.2. Description of a good practice

The report contains *an alphabetical list of the selected good practices* (Page 20-21). The titles in this list give an indication of the variety of good practices that have been identified. Additional information can be found through the references to the national websites of the project, each in the language of a participating country.

This report contains brief descriptions of several good practices by way of example.

Descriptions of each good practice (in English) according to the following ten points are available online at [www.preventelderabuse.eu](http://www.preventelderabuse.eu).

1. Title of the good practice
2. Goals
3. Target Group
4. Approach: the way in which the good practice is implemented
5. Who implements this good practice, the organisation or the individuals who do the work?

6. What material is available on this good practice (e.g. description, website)
7. How widely is this good practice used?
8. What are the results, outcomes, experiences with this good practice?
9. Have effect studies been conducted?
10. What are the success factors?

### 3.3. Classification of all good practices

The 40 selected good practices were classified by the project partners themselves and were not checked by a third party. The classification was performed according to the characteristics described in this section. A good practice can be present in more characteristics together.

In this report, we make only several brief statements about the nature of the collection of good practices as a whole.

#### Types of elder abuse (see Section 2.1)

Many of the good practices (24) involve all types of elder abuse.

Examples of those are ‘Platform against violence within the family’ (Austria) and ‘Free 24-hour hotline for the elderly in case of abuse’ (Slovenia).

Most the good practices were classified under the categories of financial/material abuse (39), psychological abuse (38) and discrimination (38). Relatively few were classified under self-neglect (23) and institutional abuse (22).

It is clear that nearly all good practices covered most types of abuse. It is apparently possible to address all forms of abuse through a single activity. The fact that we identified few practices that target specific types of abuse could be due to several reasons. First, a ‘non-specific’ approach can be more effective for phenomena that often involve multiple facets and causes. Second, it could be more ‘natural’ to start with a generalist approach, which can subsequently be made more specific through development. Some types of elder abuse, however (e.g. financial abuse, sexual abuse and self-neglect) call for more specialised activities, due to their specific stakeholders and psychological dimensions, which would otherwise be overlooked.

#### Campaign ‘End Elder Abuse’ (The Netherlands)

This campaign is organised according to a ‘2-A formula’:

- 1 Ambassador touring the country
- 2 Adoption of action against elder abuse by municipalities and local and regional organisations

Actions include:

- working with stakeholders in each district

- joining forces with existing organisations and networks
- reminding organisations of their engagement, expertise and responsibilities
- appointing an ambassador for meetings, contacts and consultations
- informing collaborative partners and target groups
- informing the field and the public nationwide
- composing and distributing newsletters and factsheets

Operated by: Two national institutes and the national ambassador

## Activities

The following activities were distinguished.

1. Education and Training
2. Quality improvement/protocols and tools
3. Law and regulations
4. Policy measures
5. Empowerment and participation
6. Network development
7. Support/advice
8. Awareness-raising

Most of the good practices involve awareness-raising (27 practices in 7 countries), followed by education and training (24 practices in 7 countries) and empowerment and participation (23 practices in 8 countries). One interesting example in the category of awareness-raising is the national campaign entitled 'End elder abuse' (Netherlands), while the annual 'Say no to ageism' week (Ireland) provides an example in the category of empowerment and participation.

Only a few activities address the area of law and regulations (4 practices in 3 countries). Activities involving policy measures and network development are included 11 times each. The other activities fall somewhere in between.

### Platform against violence within the family (Austria)

This project involves a nationwide forum for exchanging experiences and raising awareness with regard to the topic of violence within the family. It also includes an instrument for cross-linking Austrian aid organisations (45).

The project is divided into five sections, one of which concerns elder abuse.

Partners in the platform offer a wide range of activities, including various courses, workshops, self-help groups, conferences, panel discussions, newsletters and magazines.

Operated by: the partners in the platform

### Training of professionals, particularly those working within the Health Service Executive (Ireland)

The objective of this programme is to ensure that staff members are aware of elder abuse and of the appropriate policies and procedures. The elder abuse officers from the Health Service Executive provide training for health care

professionals, as well as train-the-trainer modules on elder abuse.

The National Quality Standards for Residential Care Settings for Nursing Homes (Standard 8) requires nursing home staff members to be trained.

Operated by: the independent inspectorate of nursing homes



### Tele-alert emergency service: RED BUTTON (Greece)

The project provides older people with a small device that can be worn around the neck or on the hand. In case of emergency, the wearer simply pushes the red button on the device, which transmits the emergency signal to the management of the Call Coordination Centre, which operates 24 hours a day. Trained staff members (e.g. psychologists,

social workers, nurses, doctors) are responsible for the emergency calls. In addition, specialised social workers oversee the participating older people, evaluate cases by conducting interviews and provide social support.

Priority is given to those living on their own.

Operated by: a Greek NGO

Research was added as an activity later on, and two good practices (in Ireland and the Netherlands) were characterised by research.

The inclusion of awareness raising as an activity in most of the identified good practices clearly demonstrates the importance of this activity – it is a basic element of prevention. Without adequate information about elder abuse, it is impossible to recognise it.

The type of activities apparently depends upon the country's stage of development regarding the issue of elder abuse. The relatively small amount of practices involving policy measures and network development underscores this observation. The national-level recommendations formulated in this report (see Section 4.1) call for expanding these types of activities in the coming years (see Section 4.1).

### Target groups

The following target groups were distinguished.

1. Care professionals
2. Family carers
3. Justice officials / Police
4. Policymakers
5. Advocacy
6. Volunteer organisations
7. Older people
8. General public

Most of the good practices are directed towards 'older people' themselves (29 practices in 8 countries). The 'Tele-alert emergency service: Red Button' project (Greece) is one example. After the target group of 'older people', the groups towards which the most activities are focussed consists of 'healthcare professionals' (26 practices in 7 countries), followed by 'volunteer organisations' (22 practices in 6 countries) and 'family carers' (18 practices in 6 countries).

We were pleased to see that many good practices are reaching several target groups at the same time and that nearly all target groups are covered. Some of the good practices are general, addressing all target groups together, while others are specifically focused on a particular target group. Both approaches can be effective, depending upon the activities and the intended purposes.

Because the problem of elder abuse involves many actors, the organisation of activities necessarily involves considering the relationships between these actors, as well as how they can be reached. One helpful strategy involves focusing activities by distinguishing between the target group and the group of benefit, the latter of which can be reached by the target group. In many cases, it is necessary to reach older people indirectly through their networks. One reason for this is the possible presence of mental / cognitive problems, another reason is the possibility that the offender

## Workshops – trainings (Slovakia)

Workshops and trainings are organised on a regular basis for older people in various regions of Slovakia, in order to provide them with a broader view of their rights, demands and possibilities for enforcement and protection.

The project involves self-government, various organisations within the regions and the police force.

Participants in these activities consist largely of older people, who then share the experiences they have gained with others in their neighbourhoods.

Operated by: our project partner

is part of the network. Increasing the number of people within an older person's network who are aware of the problem will increase the likelihood that they will notice signals well in advance.

### Levels

The good practices outlined operate at various levels: national, regional and local. Most of the good practices operate at the national level (31 practices in 7 countries). In our opinion, this demonstrates a certain amount of national attention for the issue, although it does not necessarily indicate the presence of existing

national policies (see Section 4.1).

The good practices at the regional and local levels are quite interesting as well. Activities at these levels can be more effective and have a more powerful impact in practice, as they are closer to the older people themselves, as well as to the practice contexts of professionals, volunteers and family carers. In cases in which governmental action on this issue is organised decentrally, these levels are indispensable.

It is nonetheless important to note that each level is necessary. Each has its own responsibilities and duties, which work together

## Regional coordinators for preventing elder abuse (Slovenia)

This project involves 12 regionally organised coordinators for abuse prevention. Their tasks include the coordination of inter-institutional cooperation, the operation of multidisciplinary teams in refer-

ence to individual cases of abuse, the provision of professional support to service agencies, the organisation and maintenance of a network of Social Security services, the provision of training for professionals and the development of tasks in the field of abuse prevention.

Operated by: the Centres for Social Work

in conjunction. Countries in which activities exist only at the local level (as in Italy) or in which there are no good practices at all (as in Poland) are faced with a considerable challenge.

### Types of prevention

Three types of prevention can be distinguished, each focused on a specific target group.

1. **Primary prevention** involves actions aimed at preventing elder abuse. The target group consists of all older people.
2. **Secondary prevention** involves actions aimed at identifying and detecting elder abuse at the earliest stage, before it becomes noticeable. The main goal is to stop the abuse and to prevent it from getting worse. The target group consists of older people who are experiencing the early stages of an abusive situation.
3. **Tertiary prevention** involves programmes aimed at improving the lives of victims of elder abuse by stopping the abuse and providing tools to prevent them from becoming victims again in the future. The target group consists of older people who are victims of elder abuse.

Most of the good practices involved primary prevention (26 practices in 8 countries) and secondary prevention (28 practices in 7 countries). These are the most important levels in terms of preventing elder abuse, while the tertiary level addresses abuse that has already occurred. This level of prevention is obviously necessary as well, given that it addresses abuse in increasingly concrete and urgent situations. It is interesting to note that most of the good practices involve all three levels of prevention.

### 3.4. Finally

The good practices gathered in EuROPEAN project can serve as inspiration for policymakers, stakeholders, professionals and experts with regard to new practices or policy. These parties may also add new examples of good practices to the existing online database.

There is also a need to monitor good practices by studying their effectiveness. Such studies are not yet available. Future evaluation could make it necessary to delete some of the practices that are currently included in the database.

#### Saver – Support Service for elderly people victims of violence and criminal offences (Italy)

This project provides support to victims of elder abuse and criminal offenders and reduces the effects of violence through:

- intervention and support (home visits and a social help line)

- health and psychological care to help victims overcome the traumatic and stressful event
- activities aimed at facilitating the participation of older people in recreational and social activities
- legal assistance
- support in finding solutions to prevent abuse in the future
- technical support (by elderly volunteers) in repairing material damages

Operated by: the Municipality of Rome

# Good Practices EUROPEAN Alphabetical

There are English descriptions of the characteristics of each good practice on [www.preventelderabuse.eu](http://www.preventelderabuse.eu)

	Title	Country	More information
1	Action plan and protocol assessment legal capability for notarial services – The Royal Dutch Notarial Society (2006)	The Netherlands	<a href="http://www.notaris.nl">www.notaris.nl</a>
2	Activity ‘Senior of the Year’- Awarding older people.	Slovakia	<a href="http://www.forumseniorov.sk">www.forumseniorov.sk</a>
3	Advocacy in Residential Long-term Care for Older People	Ireland	<a href="http://www.hse.ie/eng">www.hse.ie/eng</a> + <a href="http://www.myhomeformhome.ie">www.myhomeformhome.ie</a>
4	Annual ‘Say No to Ageism’ week	Ireland	<a href="http://www.equality.ie">www.equality.ie</a>
5	Community Day Care Centres	Greece	<a href="http://www.kapiap.gr">www.kapiap.gr</a>
6	Domestic Violence: seminars for workers in helping sphere	Czech Republic	<a href="http://www.csspraha.cz">www.csspraha.cz</a>
7	Free 24 hours phone for the elderly in cases of abuse	Slovenia	<a href="http://www.gov.si">www.gov.si</a>
8	Health and Social Care Services for Older People in Ireland	Ireland	<a href="http://www.hse.ie/eng">www.hse.ie/eng</a>
9	Health and Social Care Staff Elder Abuse Policy and Training	Ireland	<a href="http://www.hse.ie/eng">www.hse.ie/eng</a>
10	‘Help at Home’ programs	Greece	<a href="http://www.cityofathens.gr">www.cityofathens.gr</a>
11	Information brochure ‘Recognizing abuse. Questions and answers’.	Austria	<a href="http://www.broschuerenservice.bmask.gv.at">www.broschuerenservice.bmask.gv.at</a>
12	Intense respite care – MOVISIE & Mezzo 2009	The Netherlands	<a href="http://www.movisie.nl">www.movisie.nl</a>
13	Intergenerational program for quality ageing	Slovenia	<a href="http://www.inst-antonatrstenjaka.si/eng">www.inst-antonatrstenjaka.si/eng</a>
14	Municipality of Turin – Servizio Aiuto Anziani (Elderly Help Service)	Italy	<a href="http://www.comune.torino.it">www.comune.torino.it</a>
15	National Campaign ‘End elder abuse’	The Netherlands	<a href="http://www.movisie.nl">www.movisie.nl</a>
16	National conferences on discrimination, abuse, violation of rights of older people	Slovakia	<a href="http://www.forumseniorov.sk">www.forumseniorov.sk</a>
17	National Policy Document on Elder Abuse ‘Protecting our Future’ + Review of the Recommendations of ‘Protecting our Future’ (2009)	Ireland	<a href="http://www.dohc.ie">www.dohc.ie</a>
18	National Quality Standards for Residential Care Settings for Older People in Ireland and Independent Inspection of Nursing Homes	Ireland	<a href="http://www.hiqa.ie/standards">www.hiqa.ie/standards</a>
19	National SOS Help-line 10-65 (for elderly) + Silver Alert Hellas (for missing elderly persons)	Greece	<a href="http://www.silveralert.gr">www.silveralert.gr</a> + <a href="http://www.lifelinehellas.gr">www.lifelinehellas.gr</a>

	<b>Title</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>More information</b>
20	Noord-Hollands Protocol elder abuse 2009	The Netherlands	<a href="http://www.protocolouderenmishandeling.nl">www.protocolouderenmishandeling.nl</a>
21	'Open your Eyes' Awareness Raising Campaign	Ireland	<a href="http://www.hse.ie">www.hse.ie</a>
22	Patto per Asti sicura / A local agreement for a safe Asti (Province)	Italy	<a href="http://www.interno.it">www.interno.it</a>
23	Platform against violence within the family	Austria	<a href="http://www.platformgegendiegewalt.at">www.platformgegendiegewalt.at</a>
24	Policies on Elder Abuse within the Community and Voluntary Sector for example Age Action's Elder Abuse policy.	Ireland	<a href="http://www.ageaction.ie">www.ageaction.ie</a>
25	Project: quality of care and quality of life of carers	Czech republic	<a href="http://www.uss.upol.cz">www.uss.upol.cz</a>
26	Quality standards of social care	Czech republic	<a href="http://www.mpsv.cz">www.mpsv.cz</a>
27	Regional coordinators for preventing elder abuse	Slovenia	<a href="http://www.gov.si">www.gov.si</a>
28	Research Intercultural aspects of elder abuse, for the city of Amsterdam (Verwey Jonker Institute, 2010)	The Netherlands	<a href="http://www.verwey-jonker.nl">www.verwey-jonker.nl</a>
29	Research on Elder Abuse	Ireland	<a href="http://www.ncpop.ie">www.ncpop.ie</a>
30	Rotterdam action plan and city team against elder abuse (2008)	The Netherlands	<a href="http://www.ggd.rotterdam.nl">www.ggd.rotterdam.nl</a> + <a href="http://www.huiselijkgeweld.rotterdam.nl">www.huiselijkgeweld.rotterdam.nl</a>
31	Saver (Support for elderly people victims by violence and criminal offences) – Municipality of Rome	Italy	<a href="http://www.auser.it">www.auser.it</a>
32	Senior Academy	Czech republic	<a href="http://www.mppraha.cz">www.mppraha.cz</a>
33	Senior Case Work Service for the Protection of Older People	Ireland	<a href="http://www.hse.ie">www.hse.ie</a>
34	Senior Line – nation-wide, free of charge, telephone line – providing advice and help	Slovakia	<a href="http://www.forumseniorov.sk">www.forumseniorov.sk</a>
35	Social security program "Older for older"	Slovenia	<a href="http://www.zdus-zveza.si">www.zdus-zveza.si</a>
36	Tele-alert emergency service: 'Red Button'	Greece	<a href="http://www.lifelinehellas.gr">www.lifelinehellas.gr</a>
37	Tailor-made prevention for home carers of older people with behavioural disorders (dialogue model).	The Netherlands	<a href="http://www.trimbos.nl">www.trimbos.nl</a>
38	Train-the-trainer in elder abuse (Foundation Zet, region Noord-Brabant)	The Netherlands	<a href="http://www.zet-brabant.nl">www.zet-brabant.nl</a>
39	Training elder abuse (Foundation Zet, region Noord-Brabant)	The Netherlands	<a href="http://www.zet-brabant.nl">www.zet-brabant.nl</a>
40	Workshops – trainings, Implementation of activities for prevention from elder abuse in Slovak regions	Slovakia	<a href="http://www.forumseniorov.sk">www.forumseniorov.sk</a>





# 4.

## Recommendations

### 4.1. National level: break the silence and eliminate the taboo!

#### Towards a national programme

In order to combat elder abuse on an effective and structural basis, each national government must first recognise the problem. This involves the following:

- acknowledging the existence of elder abuse
- recognising that elder abuse is a violation of human rights
- acknowledging the role of the state in addressing elder abuse, even when it occurs in the private sphere
- recognising the necessity of a legal framework for combating elder abuse effectively

Recognition is a basic condition for combating elder abuse. It must be clear to everyone that elder abuse is unacceptable at any level and in any setting.

Second, each national government should develop and implement a programme or action plan in order to arrive at an effective, comprehensive approach. Because elder abuse is a complex, multilayered problem, an integral approach is necessary, in which many different governmental and non-governmental parties are involved. Elder abuse is a societal problem involving many dimensions, including human rights, domestic violence, criminal and civil law, health and healthcare, welfare, employee working conditions, vocational education and life-long learning, the organisation of community and public space, police, justice systems and banking. A cross-departmental approach is therefore preferable. Each country must identify its own approach to and strategy for combating elder abuse. The approach taken will be influenced by

cultural, economic and social aspects, demographic development and the historical response of policy to this issue.

A broad discussion about a national definition of elder abuse can be a preliminary step, although it is difficult to reach consensus in this area (see Section 2.1). The discussion itself can be valuable as a means of raising awareness.

The next step could involve analysing the current national policy, as the project partners did. The following scheme of factors to consider could facilitate the analysis, as all of these factors are included in the policy-development process.

### Schematic representation of factors in a policy process

Legislation and regulation	Stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Criminal law</li> <li>• Civil law</li> <li>• Quality of care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government (national and local)</li> <li>• Non-governmental organisations</li> <li>• Professionals and volunteers</li> <li>• Setting of residential care facilities and family settings.</li> </ul>
Process agreements	Supporting conditions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direction and coordination</li> <li>• Responsibilities and duties</li> <li>• Comprehensive chain and networking (inter-agency cooperation)</li> <li>• Agreements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standards</li> <li>• Codes</li> <li>• Budget</li> <li>• Skills</li> <li>• Organisations</li> <li>• Information</li> </ul>

The analysis should also clearly specify the actors that will be the most important in terms of policy and execution. This can differ from country to country, and it need not always involve the national government. It is thus important to allocate the direction and coördination properly at both levels and to seek commitment regarding this allocation.

The third step involves considering the level at which each factor should be addressed in a long-term approach (ambition) and the way in which this goal is to be achieved (plan). The use of good practices can be very helpful in this step.

This procedure will produce a national mid-term programme or action plan with achievable goals. Parliamentary approval with clear political responsibility, a legal basis and specific financial resources/budget will be important for commitment and practicability.

Each country is advised to consider and use all available opportunities.

National mainstreaming involves adding the issue of elder abuse to existing strong social movement about human rights, domestic violence or the quality of care. It is important, however, to ensure that such mainstreaming makes the issue explicit rather than invisible. Elder abuse has its own specific characteristics and stakeholders, and it therefore requires specific knowledge, approach and agreements.

Another opportunity involves local initiatives in communities and municipalities. Supporting good initiatives at these levels can stimulate the combination of a bottom-up and a top-down approach.

A helpful model<sup>7</sup> for developing a comprehensive programme includes the following elements:

1. placing elder abuse on the political agenda and addressing the issue at the national level
2. informing the general public
3. providing prevention for at-risk groups
4. detecting elder abuse
5. intervention

7 Inspired by a Dutch model for addressing domestic violence at the local level

6. assistance in case of elder abuse
7. follow-up care and relapse prevention

The recommendations below have been ordered according to these elements. Each element is necessary. For example, starting a public campaign requires the simultaneous creation of an infrastructure for interventions. Otherwise, the victims (and offenders) addressed by the campaign would have nowhere to go for help.

Establishing national policy for preventing elder abuse requires a comprehensive approach, which could include the seven elements mentioned above. Each country can set its own priorities with regard to these elements, and each can decide the extent to which they will invest and in which period. The process can start small by addressing one type of elder abuse or one setting, making a mid-term plan, realising/implementing it, conducting an evaluation and expanding the struggle against elder abuse into a wider programme.

This would ensure the continuous growth of national policy.

### Recommendations in the form of a checklist

The recommendations are presented under seven headings incorporating various steps that countries can take in order to develop and implement national policy.

This checklist can serve as a roadmap to national policy. Although the list is as complete as possible, national programmes or action plans require choices, at least in terms of time.

#### 1. Place elder abuse on the political agenda and address the issue at the national level by:

- starting a discussion and placing elder abuse high on the national political agenda
- formulating a positive vision on ageing and the positive power of older people in society

- gathering knowledge about theories on elder abuse, risk factors and protective factors
- evaluating the legal framework and address gaps in legislation
- making funds available for combating elder abuse
- paying special attention to particular groups of older people (e.g. older people in lower socio-economic classes, ethnic minorities and/or any other relevant group)
- ensuring the participation of older people by involving them (or their representatives) in the actions
- allocating responsibilities and duties to stakeholders and making binding agreements between them and on different levels (national, regional and local)
- make agreements about the methods and process
- of reporting and registration of elder abuse.

#### 2. Inform the general public by:

- establishing public-awareness campaigns, including such messages as 'Elder abuse is not acceptable' and 'Public care for others'
  - informing the general public about relevant existing legislation and regulations
    - ensuring the participation of older people by involving them (or their representatives) in the actions
      - establishing a coordinated approach between actors (government, non-governmental organisations, professionals, advocacy groups, financial institutions) at various levels (national, regional and local)
      - ensuring the availability of professionals in the position to perform early detection and to provide adequate referral to support organisations.

"This checklist can serve as a roadmap to national policy"

#### 3. Provide prevention for at-risk groups by:

- increasing the independence and participation of older people
- developing methods for eliminating social isolation

- establishing a targeted campaign for breaking the silence and eliminating taboo
  - disseminating information about relevant legislation: making visible the content of the specific articles focused on combating elder abuse
  - developing the necessary tools, standards and protocols concerning the quality of care and the recognition of elder abuse
  - developing specific modules on the prevention of elder abuse for the curricula of vocational education and training the workforce
  - raising the profession of carer by requiring a recognised minimum level of skills, behaviour and ethos
  - providing adequate support for volunteers and family carers.
4. Detect elder abuse by:
- increasing the skills of professionals in the early identification and recognition of signs of elder abuse (red flags)
  - informing professionals adequately about the existing tools, standards, protocols regarding the quality of care and what to do if they are not being performed
  - informing professionals adequately about procedures and standards for recognising elder abuse in time and addressing it in both institutions and families
  - using key individuals within the target group for confidential interviews
  - ensuring an adequate infrastructure to facilitate the reporting and registration of elder abuse
  - ensuring an adequate infrastructure to inform and support volunteers and family carers.
5. Intervene by:
- ensuring an adequate instrument for analysis and assessment to facilitate the decision regarding how to intervene
  - ensuring an adequate legal framework making it possible to intervene (including in family settings)
  - ensuring easy access to the reporting infrastructure in case of elder abuse



- ensuring the availability of adequate tools, standards and protocols for intervention
  - increasing the skills of professionals involved in intervention
  - increasing cooperation and coordination between parties involved in the intervention.
6. Assist in case of elder abuse by:
- ensuring adequate protection for victims and reporters
  - ensuring adequate support for family carers
  - ensuring adequate prosecution, punishment and/or support for offenders
  - ensuring a comprehensive chain between helping organisations
  - organising a method for reporting and registration in case of abuse.

#### 7. Provide follow-up care and relapse prevention by:

- performing adequate monitoring at the individual and structural level
- improving the monitoring skills of professionals
- improving and monitoring compliance; reviewing procedures and standards
- ensuring the structural protection of victims and reporters
- ensuring structural support for volunteers and family carers
- ensuring structural support for offenders
- ensuring changes in the family or residential setting in order to eliminate risk
- ensuring independent control within institutions.

### An example of using the checklist

A country could decide to start a programme or action plan with a focus on family carers in the family setting. That country could take the steps necessary to combat elder abuse in this setting by starting to analyse the current situation according to questions about the four factors in the scheme:

1) Which legislation and regulations are relevant? 2) Which stakeholders should be involved and which target groups should be addressed? 3) Which process agreements should be developed? 4) Which supporting conditions should be realised?

The country could further choose one or more of the recommendations mentioned under the seven elements. For example, a programme could consist of

the following components: gathering knowledge about theories and risk factors regarding elder abuse in this setting (Recommendation 1);

establishing an awareness campaign specific to family carers (Recommendation 2); providing adequate support for family carers (Recommendation 3) and ensuring an adequate infrastructure (Recommendation 4) for this support (e.g. time-out, respite care, see Good Practice 12); increasing the skills of family carers in recognising the risk factors for abuse in their setting and what they can do to prevent abuse (Recommendation 4) and ensuring the availability of professionals or others to keep in touch with (and monitor) the family (Recommendation 7).

### Policy for family carers, an example of using the checklist

## 4.2. European level: necessary

### Towards a minimum political level in the European Region

The EuROPEAN project illustrates that some national governments

do not yet recognise elder abuse as a political issue. When recognition is not the case, the enormous harm or distress, the violation of civil and human rights and the lack of protection and punishment continue undiminished. National governmental intervention is necessary in order to halt the abuse of vulnerable older people. Rec-

ognition of the problem is a basic condition for each of the member states of Europe, as expressed in Section 4.1 of this report.

To date, this minimum level has not been achieved throughout the European Region, despite the Charter of Fundamental Rights, included in the Lisbon Treaty (Dec. 2007)<sup>8</sup> and the United Nations Resolution on Ageing (Dec. 2010).

We call upon the European Union (EU) and the Council of Europe to take action to realise this basic condition in all countries within the European Region in order to halt elder abuse.

### **Towards integral national policies in each European member state**

The EuROPEAN project also illustrates that some countries do not yet have integral national policies or programmes for achieving the next phase of combating elder abuse systematically. We advise the EU to promote this in each country. Such promotion would be very helpful to the NGOs in countries that are also advocating an integral national governmental approach.

The European Union Treaties do not confer competence on the European Union to develop legislation on elder abuse. Health-care and the protection of the fundamental rights of dependent older people remains a competence of each member state.<sup>9</sup> There is attention to elder abuse at the EU level, however, within the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) on Social Protection and Social Inclusion, which promotes the coordination of national policies for long-term care. Common objectives have been adopted within this framework, including access, quality and financial sustainability.

Improvements in the quality of long-term care would obviously be of great help in preventing elder abuse and neglect. They are not sufficient, however, given the fact that some older people are abused while they are not in long-term care, whether institutional

or community-based.

European-level activity is also taking place in the area of Domestic Violence. In addition to women and children, attention is increasing for older people as potential victims. In this case as well, however, it is important to remember that elder abuse is much broader than domestic violence.

As is the case at the national level, an integral, political and programmatic approach is also needed at the European level. Division of the issue into various components at the political level eliminates the possibility of achieving the necessary consistency in practice. For this reason, it will be necessary to involve the DG for Employment and Social Affairs as well as the DG for Justice and the DG for Health and Consumers.

Finally, elder abuse is a multilayered problem. In addition to aspects of 'soft competence', this phenomenon involves aspects of 'hard competence', including the working conditions of professional carers, cross-border employees, consumer credit and banking, police and the justice system and even use of medicines. On these last aspects the EU could accomplish more in both the short and the long term, as long as there is a political will to do so.

### **Recommendations for the European Union**

1. The European Union should press for the recognition of elder abuse as a political issue in each member state of Europe as a minimum level. The following elements would be helpful:
  - an European political statement of the role of the state in combating elder abuse, even if the abuse takes place within the private sphere;
  - a positive vision on ageing and the power/rights of older people within society;
  - dissemination of the WHO definition of elder abuse.
2. The European Union should promote integral national policies and programmes on preventing and combating elder

<sup>8</sup> Art. 1, 3, 4 and 25

<sup>9</sup> Treaty on the functioning of the European Union

abuse in each member state of the European Union, include the promotion of the EuROPEAN checklist proposed in this report (Section 4.1).

3. At the European level, the European Union should address the problem of elder abuse as an undivided political issue, resulting in an integral and comprehensive approach on the issue of Elder Abuse. Specific activities should be expanded,<sup>10</sup> as in the following examples:
  - organise conferences with stakeholders.<sup>11</sup>
  - adjust and coordinate between the DGs involved.
  - publish a specific staff working paper or a communication.<sup>12</sup>
  - place the issue within the context of the European Year of Active Ageing in 2012.
  - stimulate specific European research.
  - use the budgets of programmes (e.g. PROGRESS and DAPHNE III).
  - continue mutual learning by exchanging good practices (use and expand the existing online database of EuROPEAN) and through exchange programmes involving visits to countries that already have national programmes on elder abuse.

- continue European projects, including the addition of missing issues (e.g. elder abuse and ethnic minorities).
- conduct monitoring, perhaps by means of an observatory.

4. Explore the possibility of coordinated legislation on the few aspects of elder abuse upon which the EU has undisputed competence, such as, for example, financial elder abuse in the area of consumer protection.

### Recommendation for the Council of Europe

As a community of values, the Council of Europe is another very important actor. It operates in Strasbourg and covers the Region above the EU borders.

The Council of Europe should emphasise elder abuse as an act that violates human right.

The project partners ask the Council to explore their potential role in ending the problem of elder abuse. One possible measure could involve a Convention on preventing and combating elder abuse, similar to the Convention on prevention and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul, 11.V.2011)

7 In addition to other EU initiatives, e.g. the Carers leave Directive, European Voluntary Framework on Quality in Social Services and Long-Term Care staff working document.

We also refer to the European charter for rights and responsibilities of older people in need of long-term care and assistance, June 2010 (a result of the EUSTACEA project – [www.age-platform.eu/en/daphne](http://www.age-platform.eu/en/daphne)). This charter is intended as a re-

ference document within the European Union, and it should be used to influence the content of legislation concerning older people in the EU member states.

8 Planned for late 2011

9 As in the Discussion Paper (March 2008): What can the European Union do to protect dignity in old age and to prevent elder abuse?







This European Reference Framework for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and Neglect was developed within the scope of the EUROPEAN project (2009 – 2011), with support from the European Union, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion as a pilot project on preventing elder abuse.



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Greece  
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Ireland  
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Italy  
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Poland  
(Fundacja JA KOBIETA)



Slovakia (Fórum pre pomoc  
starším – národná siet)



Slovenia  
(ZDUS)



The Netherlands  
(ANBO)



The Netherlands  
(MOVISIE)

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