



■ Members of the Grundtvig delegation from Finland, Romania and Italy, and Age Action staff pictured at a presentation in the Age Action offices during their visit to Ireland.

Dublin played host to next stage of Combatting Elder Abuse programme

In the March edition of Ageing Matters, we wrote about our visit to Helsinki as part of a Grundtvig project — Combatting Elder Abuse — which is part of the European Commission’s Lifelong Learning Programme.

The project’s goal is to develop training materials and methods to raise awareness about the issue of elder abuse. The second

meeting of the partnership took place in Dublin from June 25 to 27.

Luckily for us and our visitors, the June weather in Dublin was far more inviting than the - 6C temperatures of Helsinki in January.

We began our meeting with an update since we last met, including an overview of how each country marked World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on June 15.

Partner organisations, including Age Action, participated in various WEAAD conferences and meetings.

During a lunch break on

our first day, we treated our guests to a short walk through the campus of Ireland’s oldest university, Trinity College. Our visitors were interested in the Book of Kells exhibition at the Old Library, which they had a chance to visit on Friday after our final meeting in Dublin.

The afternoon session of our first day included inputs from a number of organisations dealing with the issue of elder abuse in Ireland. First, we heard from Age & Opportunity who outlined a number of their

programmes dedicated to breaking down stereotypes of older people, along with their personal development programmes aimed at older people.

Two gardai gave a presentation about doorstep safety and financial security for older people. When opening the door to strangers, gardai recommend using a door chain and handing callers a card on which they to write their contact information. They also said older people should ask unknown callers to leave a business card. Legitimate callers should always be willing to leave a business card.

Our guests then received a presentation from the National Centre for the Protection of Older People, who outlined the research they have conducted on older people's experience of elder abuse in Ireland. Each of these presentations offered meaningful insight into the experience of older people in Ireland and helped give shape to our later discussions of training materials and methods.

Thursday began with a talk by an officer for the Protection of Older People from the HSE, who took us through the elder abuse prevention training designed by them for nursing home carers. The outline of training was accompanied by an awareness-raising DVD that

people could take away with them. Our partners found this extremely helpful.

On Thursday afternoon, the format changed when the group made a number of site visits. They headed to the Gaiety School of Acting in Temple Bar where they learned about Breathe, a programme designed to raise awareness about the well-being and positive mental health of young people. We hope to incorporate some aspects of the Breathe programme into our final training product. The Gaiety School even provided us with a tour of Smock Alley Theatre, the oldest in Europe.

The group then visited the Senior Help Line office on Amiens Street. Senior Help Line volunteers are trained to promote their own mental health and personal development while they help people who use the service — an important aspect in elder abuse awareness training.

Our last stop on Thursday was at Age Action's offices on Abbey Street, where we introduced our guests to the various services Age Action provides, including advocacy and policy, computer training and digital inclusion, the Care and Repair programme, and the information service.

An important part of the Grundtvig project on elder abuse is to learn about each other's culture and

spend time engaging in social activities together. So on Thursday evening all the partners dined together. We also introduced our visitors to traditional Irish music at the Cobblestone pub in Dublin. In true Irish fashion, the evening was blessed with a downpour of rain.

On our last day, we started to see what our final product would look like.

We decided to focus the elder abuse awareness training on informal carers, as well as empowering older people themselves. From our HSE training experience, we decided to include role-play and case studies as the main facets of our training programme to help carers develop a sense of empathy and understanding for the older person's position. We also hope to incorporate some trust exercises and ice-breakers that we learned from the Gaiety School of Acting.

The goal of the project will be to promote ageing with dignity and respect, and it looks like that's where we are headed in our final two meetings, which will take place in Romania and Italy.

— Emily Widra

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