



***LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAMME'S GRUNDTVIG
PARTNERSHIP PROJECT***

COMBATING ELDER ABUSE

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

PROJECT DURATION 1.8.2013 – 31.7.2015

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Introduction

The partnership of this project was based on European level projects ‘The European Reference Framework Online for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and Neglect’ (2009-2011) and “Wellbeing and Dignity of Older people, WeDO” (2010-2012). Italy, Ireland and Finland participated in one or both of the projects. Romania was a new member of this partnership.

Under-reporting of elder abuse and the insufficient recognition of the issue at a societal level shows the need for increased awareness, training and a change in attitudes towards ageing and older people amongst professionals and those who work in communities outside formal services with and for older people. The latter group of people consists of voluntary workers and informal carers. Raising awareness and knowledge of elder abuse amongst older people themselves and their families is also crucial.

A common need of the partner organizations in this project was to continuously find new knowledge and ways to educate, train and support local and national authorities, informal and professional carers and volunteers to protect older people from abuse and to empower older people themselves to take control their own lives and to create opportunities for their participation in society.

The project included transnational partner meetings, seminars, site visits, World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) events and workshops for informal carers for piloting the training material.

The project evaluation was internal and adopted a formative evaluation model with a participatory approach. Formative evaluation (Nagarajan N & Vanheukelen M 1997, European Commission; Pennella S 2004, European Trade Union Institute) focuses on the project process, progress and outcomes. Participatory approach means that the evaluator participates in the project activities and works in partnership with the partners. The meaning of this is to promote transparency of the evaluation and make the project a shared learning process.

In this model and approach evaluation is in the hands of the participants, not only the coordinating organization or evaluator. This kind of evaluation empowers participants but requires their commitment to the evaluation process with the evaluator.

The evaluation of the project progress occurred in tandem with the different stages of the project and coincided with each partner meeting. Time was set aside at each meeting to discuss progress, the meeting of objectives and any issues or concerns. After each transnational partner meeting, partners provided feedback on the appropriateness of the methods being used, any changes needed, the learning from the meeting, the quality of the partnership including communication between partners.

This evaluation report focuses on the achievement of the project objectives, the relevance of the results for the participating countries, usefulness and benefits of the results for the target groups and participating organizations and for the EU – level work.

The achievement of the project objectives

The objectives of the project were to expand knowledge and awareness on ways to prevent elder abuse at a local, national and European level; share and develop innovative training material and methods and ways to raise awareness of elder abuse among volunteers, informal carers and older people and their families; engage in national elder abuse awareness raising through involvement in World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) events.

After each transnational project meeting it was assessed how well the workshops, seminars and field visits helped to achieve the project objectives. Also assessed were the appropriateness of the methods and processes used to expand the knowledge and experiences on ways to train volunteers and informal carers and support abused older people and their families.

The project shared and expanded knowledge, experiences and awareness on ways to prevent elder abuse at a local, national and European level through the hosting of site visits and seminars in each country. At the transnational meetings, the host partner organized for partners and stakeholders to participate in seminars and share knowledge on ways of raising awareness and preventing elder abuse. For example in Italy, the police spoke about a community programme they are running; in Ireland, participants had an opportunity to participate in the elder abuse training programme for formal care staff. The workshop was delivered by a dedicated elder abuse officer with the Health Service Executive. In Finland the seminar highlighted the context and the different programmes operating within the country.e.g. the Jade project gave an important insight into ageing in a new home country.

Workshops, seminars and site visits showed how prevention, awareness, training and responses to elder abuse varied significantly between countries. Through this sharing of experiences, innovative training material and methods on ways to raise awareness of elder abuse among volunteers, informal carers and older people and their families was developed. . The elder abuse training material developed addresses elder abuse both in the context in which it may occur by incorporating role plays that challenge ageism and offers a ‘hands on’ resource for exploring case of elder abuse. It explains what elder abuse is and the different types.

The workshops provided insight into how the different partner countries addressed elder abuse, the site visits showed different ways of empowering and maintaining older people’s engagement in the community. For example in Helsinki, a site visit to an Alzheimer’s Centre and the Kampi Centre illustrated how the provision of meaningful activities for people with dementia, benefits

both the person with dementia and their carer (reducing carer stress) and how opportunities to remain engaged in retirement (socialise, learn new things, share skills) tackles social isolation reducing risk of elder abuse..

The project engaged in national elder abuse awareness raising through involvement in World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) events. Finland has organized events for ten years and the others at least over the last 2 years. Each partner has participated in raising awareness of elder abuse on WEEAD through media statements, hosting seminars, participating in conferences. Romania started to organize WEAAD - events right in the beginning of the project and will continue the work every year.

As detailed in the dissemination report, throughout the lifetime of the project the partnership has perform a long list of activities aimed to spread information about the Combating Elder Abuse project and the actions performed at local / national level by each organization in the partnership..

At the same time, the dissemination strategy targeted international stakeholders, such as European and International Networks and countries not represented in the original partnership (such as Germany and Montenegro, with whom there have been exchanges thanks to the project activities).

The dissemination strategy has allowed the project reach more than 10.000 individuals and organizations and to inform them not only about the project but also about partners organizations, increasing their visibility across Europe.

Relevance of the project results and outcomes for the participating countries

The results and outcomes of this project includes the project website, press conferences associated with WEAAD campaigns, information on events for INPEA website (<http://www.inpea.net>) and the development of an elder abuse training and awareness raising package for informal carers. The link for the package will be published on the partners' websites. The training programme can be adapted for use with volunteers, older people and their families and formal carers

The main target group of this project was informal carers. Engaging them in elder abuse training and awareness raising workshops was particularly challenging as the topic is perceived to be very sensitive and carers may feel judged or criticised. . The innovative and non-threatening approach used in this project seemed to be very appropriate for this target group, as well as for the more traditional target group of professionals. Hence the the elder abuse training and awareness raising

package is a particularly useful tool in raising awareness of elder abuse and exploring ways of preventing abuse for a wide audience but in particular the target group of informal carers. .

The project and its results are relevant for the partner countries. The project website was created right in the beginning of the project and serves as one source of information on elder abuse and project initiatives. The project website provides continuation for the project and visibility of its results. Through WEAAD campaigns it was possible to share nationally new information on elder abuse prevention in partner countries. Awareness raising material developed is a very good addition to existing material. The workshops benefited professionally the organisations, as piloting the workshops allowed the trainers experience using new material with a new audience. This experience and the feedback received from participants provide , the trainers and organisations with a deeper understanding and insight into carers' lives and the best ways of approaching the sensitive issue of elder abuse.

The project partners managed to develop a shared tool, applicable in all different country contexts, through finding a synthesis among the different approaches. Initially, the partners discussed whether cultural diversity among older people in different countries would pose difficulties in developing the content of the training. However different cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds were not a major issue. The role plays and case studies developed, all came from different countries, yet each partner could identify with the scenarios. Whilst cultural differences was not an issue, a common issue for the partners was how to address the topic of elder abuse in a sensitive way. For this generation of older people, elder abuse is something that is not spoken about. Furthermore, informal carers are vulnerable due to the burden of care many experience so it is important that the training and awareness programme does not add to their anxiety or lessen their self-esteem.

Piloting of the workshops in the different countries highlighted this issue. For example, in Ireland the turnout for the workshop was lower than the number that would normally attend the monthly meeting. Omitting the word 'elder abuse' from the title of the workshop may be one way of addressing the sensitive nature of the topic, particularly for a group of people who may be experiencing carer's stress. In Italy, the workshop was entitled "Respecting the dignity of older persons: a workshop on intergenerational relations" and the numbers expected participated. In Finland, evidence of the stress carers may be experiencing was evident at the workshop, where carers participating in pilot workshop became quite emotional. The need for more support for informal carers was evident in all partner countries.

The partners will use the training resource created to deliver elder abuse awareness workshops to older people, some of whom will be carers or recipients of care. Through dissemination, other organizations supporting informal carers will be encouraged to use this resource to raise awareness of elder abuse amongst their members.

It was a common observation in the project that it is crucial to eliminate discrimination and put in place positive ageing, hence confronting ageism is a central part of the work in preventing elder abuse.

Usefulness and benefits of the project results for the target groups and participating organizations

The training package was piloted by each project partner to assess the usefulness and benefit of the training package for the informal carers. Altogether 26 informal carers participated in the training workshops. The participants were asked to give feedback on the relevance and usefulness of the training material. Most of the participants had some knowledge on the topic and they thought it was very important to talk about elder abuse. The participants thought the workshop was relevant and useful for them. According to their feedback they also learned something new on elder abuse. The methods used in the trainings were slide presentation, role plays, case studies and a table mat. The participants found all the methods useful, especially the role plays.

6

The feedback from participants was encouraging particularly about the approach used. The participants enjoyed the participatory teaching methods, such as role plays and conversation mat. The needs, feelings and emotions of the informal carers in partner countries were similar; they needed especially emotional support in their role as a caregiver. They also needed reassurance and acknowledge that their role of carer was a difficult one, but knowledge of elder abuse, the context in which it can occur and steps to take could empower them as carers and/or older people to prevent abuse happening, as the detailed information on elder abuse might easily cause uncomfortable feelings and even feelings of guilty not being “a perfect carer”. Therefore it is really important that the trainers are aware of that and are able to handle the issue carefully and show empathy for their situations. The trainers have an ethical responsibility to keep the workshop in general level and not to lead workshop too deep in emotions. The trainers have to take into account that some of the participants might need further support after the workshop.

Almost all the informal carers new something about elder abuse but they reported that they learned something new. The workshop expanded understanding about elder abuse and a key message learned was the importance of telling and looking for help.

Delivering training on such a sensitive topic to a target group already over burdened in their role as carers is challenging. Innovative training methods and practices are needed when combining

theoretical knowledge, practice and life experience. This project showed the training of this target group cannot be “just” classroom teaching in front of the audience but activating, empowering and inspiring methods, for example group work, exercises and using artistic and reminiscence methods.

The use of role-play was very powerful way of facilitating participants ‘put themselves in the other person’s shoes’, thus creating greater empathy and understanding, which in itself is a way of preventing abuse. Participating in the workshop was also beneficial in terms of providing an opportunity for social inclusion as carers met with others and could share experiences.

The participating organizations also assessed the usefulness and benefits of the project for their work. Feedback and views on the training package was collected from the facilitators of the workshops and informal carers. For some of the organizations, delivering elder abuse awareness workshop to informal carers as a target group was a new experience, as their training is usually focused on professionals. Hence, this training package offers an opportunity for new type of training and is useful to the development of the organisations’ future work.

From piloting the workshop it was evident that the training material is of benefit to the work of the organisations involved and can be incorporated into their training and workshops. This will ensure the sustainability of the project through the use of the training material. The training manual and other resources will be available as a download on all of the partners’ websites. Partners will promote the training material at every opportunity through social media, conferences and networking opportunities.

New learning was achieved through using theories around ageism and generational intelligence. These theories underlaid the development of the programme and were new to all of the partners. Approaching the topic using ageism and respect for older persons was found to be a useful and inclusive way to introduce the topic of elder abuse. The extent to which carer stress is an issue was something that partners were not as aware of as they imagined. Even in countries like Finland where carers receive significant practical support, it was evident in the pilot workshop that caers are not receiving the emotional support they need, so this is an issue that can be highlighted to governments and is useful to organizations like Age Action whose remit includes advocacy and lobbying for improvements to older people’s quality of life. At practical level, partners have more awareness of the need to address the issue of elder abuse awareness raising amongst informal carers in a way that takes account of their feelings and experiences as informal carers in a way that avoids causing them to feel guilty of not being a “perfect” carer. In addition, there is also a need to be able to signpost and provide information about carer’s support groups and ways of recognising carer burn out and dealing with carers’ stress. .

In all of the partner countries there is an absence of elder abuse awareness raising material aimed at informal carers therefore this material fills this gap. The material will be incorporated into elder abuse training for partner organisations’ staff and volunteers and for the professionals in communities. The material will be used for improvement of the training programmes delivered to older people

Usefulness and benefits of the project results for the EU – level work

When assessing the usefulness and benefits of the project results for the EU –level work, it is important to highlight how the project created an elder abuse awareness training package which is usable with small adaptation in very different countries (Anglo- Saxon, Scandinavian, Southern and Eastern European) and this is hugely beneficial and useful at an EU level. In addition, the training package will be available as a download to other organisations in other countries and will remain open to comments, suggestions for further improvements and in this way ensure usability in countries not included in the partnership.

The material will be shared through the international networks of the partner organisations, e.g. through INPEA, Eurocarers, AGE Platform European and HelpAge International. Making this knowledge more accessible will encourage and facilitate countries outside the partnership, for example Eastern European countries, to begin to get involved in wider initiatives such as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

European added value comes through transnational partnership which enriches the development process so that results

- are broader and more sensitive to the target group. For example, the Finnish partner wants to start a new service for older people which is already in use by other partners.
- Also where training programmes already exist, the partnership will give new ideas and identify new approaches to develop these further. For example Age Action organise a Positive Ageing week each year so can now incorporate this workshop as part of these events.
- Pooling expertise and resources to identify good practices from across Europe inspires new ideas and experimentations. For example having an opportunity to learn and experience the Gaiety School of acting BREATHE programme in Ireland, a youth suicide prevention programme, inspired the partners to work with the Gaiety to develop a proposal using a similar approach in raising awareness of elder abuse in nursing homes.
- The partnership will ultimately increase awareness of elder abuse and neglect in each partner country. WEAAD events will be recognized and ideas used in other European countries through the partners' networks and worldwide through INPEA. Especially Eastern European countries, outside this partnership, can benefit and start the raising awareness days (WEAAD).

- A useful added value of the transnational partnership is increased awareness and visibility of the work of partner organizations nationally and across Europe.
- The project also increases visibility of the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme and Grundtvig Partnerships activities.
- The project will be recognized across Europe by active dissemination work e.g. through websites.

Conclusion

The results of this project illustrate the effectiveness of the partnership and the work undertaken. The project met all of the time lines set within the resources available. It produced an innovative elder abuse awareness programme which will be available to NGOs and other organizations through Europe and beyond. The training material developed incorporates a Handbook, PowerPoint Presentation, Role Plays, Case Studies and Discussion Mat which can adapted to meet the needs of the target group. The usability of the material has been assessed and found to be practical and interesting to workshop participants.

9

The project also succeeded in providing dynamic networking opportunities for partners and stakeholders from different countries, where knowledge and experiences were shared both informally and formally. Each partner went away with new ways of seeing and doing things, for example Age Action is now aware of different models for delivering social engagement opportunities to older people having visited Kamppi centre in Helsinki and Social Club in Italy.

The project partners worked in a systematic way according to the agreed stages and time table. The partners took the steps needed to drive the project forward easily and were well prepared for the meetings. Active communication and input between the meetings ensured deadlines were met and the project progressed within the timeline outlined at the start.

Although the first partner meeting was delayed due to change in personnel in Age Action Ireland, this did not impact on the process or outcomes of the project.

The atmosphere in the project meetings was positive, relaxed, collaborative and respectful and allowed partners to share their ideas and comments freely. A problem was the tight schedules but communication between meetings helped to complete sharing ideas and thoughts. All partners did their tasks and kept to the time table approved together in the meetings.

The project partners have expertise in the area of elder abuse. This background knowledge and experiences, with their commitment to the project produced high quality work and reliable

results. The training material produced is innovative and transferable to a variety of situations. Added value was achieved through piloting and evaluating the material with informal carers in the four countries. Having this feedback on participants' experience and learning from the workshop validates the workshop as an effective tool in raising awareness of elder abuse amongst the target group. The resource includes both instructions on how to facilitate the workshop but also includes a tangible resource, a conversation mat and figures to aid the exploration of cases of elder abuse within the context of seeking support to mitigate carer burnout.

Lessons learned

The partner countries represented different cultural areas of Europe, yet the informal carers had similar needs in their caring role, such as need for peer and formal support.

Informal carers were willing to learn about elder abuse issues therefore the topic is relevant for them.

The subject of elder abuse was familiar to many informal carers but still they learned something new about the issue in the workshops.

The concept of ageism worked well as a common approach to the workshops and as a way into the subject.

Using the theory of generational intelligence in the workshops will depend on the age difference between carer and care recipient or age structure of the family.

The workshops were positive experience for the carers however the issue is delicate.

Workshops were accepted positively because they provided knowledge but on the other hand detailed information on elder abuse can cause uncomfortable feelings and even feelings of guilty about not being a "perfect" carer – this is something those delivering the training need to be aware of and take into account in their delivery.

The trainers need to be aware of possible feelings of guilt of carers and show empathy for their situations.

The participatory methods used in this training package engage the audience therefore it is recommended for trainers to use activating methods.

It is important to have time for discussion in the workshop.

The trainers should create ways of encouraging discussion in the workshop.

The trainers should create a welcoming atmosphere where participants feel they can talk openly, as elder abuse is not an easy topic to discuss with strangers.

The trainers should use interactive methods when using the power point presentation in the workshop, e.g. using flipchart and asking audience to give examples of elder abuse.

It is a must for the trainers to be very sensitive and not-judgmental when training informal carers.

The trainers have ethical responsibility to deal with the elder abuse issues more at general level rather than “dive into the deep waters”. As part of the planning, trainers should have a process and procedures in place to deal with disclosures and assistance where people need support after workshops.

The use of role playing is important in creating a friendly, ‘lighter’, non-threatening atmosphere for the participants allowing them engage and participate to a level they are comfortable with. Role playing can work also as an ice-breaker activity.

The training material can be adopted for use of wider groups such as volunteers, formal carers and older people and their families.