

**Gender-based Violence Against Women**  
**Report on the Experiences of Coordinating a Project aiming counteracting violence**  
**against women**

**1. Violence against women as a significant societal problem**

Despite international and national-level legislation, initiatives, and the continuous fight, gender-based violence (GBV) is still a common human rights violation within European societies and worldwide. Women and girls experience various forms of gender-based violence in a considerable number. The Covid-19 pandemic led to an increase in domestic/intimate partner violence than before. More cases were reported, and it has become crystal clear that more funding, attention and research are needed for financing support services, facilitating cooperation between institutions and awareness-raising.

Gender-based violence is not the same as violence against women (VAW); however, most gender based-violence affects mainly women and done by men. Thus, when the term of violence against women is used in reports or in any publication, it is a reflection that victims of violence are disproportionately women and girls.

The aspect of the term ‘gender-based’ for discussing violence is also essential for expressing that violence happens based on gender inequality, so it is inherently rooted in power differences/inequalities between women and men and directed towards a person because of her gender. In this sense, both women and men can experience violence, but again available data demonstrate that women are disproportionately affected by GBV. All this indicates that to understand the phenomenon of GBV, women’s unequal status in society, the unbalanced distribution of social, political, and economic power has to be tackled. Therefore, to ensure a safe and prosperous life for women, it is the responsibility of society to counteract gender-based violence.

It is not easy to systematically collect data on GBV. It is known that violence against women is underreported; therefore, when we interpret data, we should never forget that it is only a part of the actual data that we see. According to the latest, Europe-wide survey, 1 in 3 women (over the age of 15) in the European Union have experienced physical or sexual violence, or both, 1 in 2 women have experienced sexual harassment, and 1 in 20 women have been raped. A major form of gender-based violence is intimate partner violence. It is estimated that 22 % of women over the age of 15 have experienced physical and/or sexual violence, and 43% of women have experienced psychological, intimate partner violence (FRA, 2015). Cyber violence against women and girls is also a growing social problem, even though it is a relatively new form of violence. It is estimated that one in 10 women (over the age of 15) have experienced a form of ciber violence since the age of 15.

In Hungary, similarly to the European average, almost half of adult women have experienced some form of sexual harassment; and one-fifth of women over the age of 15 (it is nearly 1 million women!) are victims of some form of physical and/or sexual violence against women. In Hungary, it is calculated that one woman dies each week due to domestic violence. Sexual exploitation of women is also a major problem in Hungary, as the country is a source, transit (similarly to other Eastern European countries), and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking. The vulnerable groups particularly exposed to these challenges mainly contain women living in extreme poverty, undereducated, are Roma women and girls, single mothers or asylum-seekers. Those girls, young women who live in state care institutions or living these institutions, are extremely in danger to be exploited for sex trafficking.

According to experience and knowledge of Hungarian women's rights NGOs, and abused women goes back seven times to the abuser before leaving, a woman is beaten five times before seeking help. It is agreed that police officers and courts should receive more education on violence against women. Similarly, the legal defence is highly criticized by NGOs for its non-effectiveness and argued that the court system helps the male violence of being invisible. An empirical-based study reports that the legal system is not effective enough to treat male violence within domestic violence, (i.e., the abuser is not charged for domestic violence, but 'only' for rape, the violent events between two attack is not taken into consideration), the law does not guarantee automatic prosecution of all forms of domestic violence. The study also shared that it is a common experience by women victims, that when the attacker is set free, they are not notified, and the victims are risking a criminal procedure for slander if they talk about the abuser's violent attacks, and mediation still is part of the legal practice. In addition, it is a severe problem that abusers have visitation rights over their children, so only the fathers' rights seem to be acknowledged. Finally, it is crucial in Hungary that the Istanbul Convention, the international treaty on fighting violence against women, is signed but not ratified. There is no intention of the current political regime to ratify it.

Concerning education and prevention, it can be said about Hungary that the National Core Curriculum does not include educating children on gender-based violence. Only a few NGOs visit schools and give workshops to provide specific prevention programs for children and youth.

## **2. The main aims and activities of the project titled ‘Breaking the silence: fight violence and abuse against women’**

The ‘Breaking the silence: fight violence and abuse against women’ was a two-year-long project with a three-month extension (September 2018 - November 2020), co-funded under the Erasmus+ Programme, Key Action 2: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices. The project aimed to 1) to share good practices among involved partners, 2) to learn new tools and methodologies 3) to increase awareness on GBV in our societies, and 4) to strengthen alliances at regional, national and international level with entities that are fighting to counteract gender-based violence and abuse. We wanted to expand our knowledge on GBV and learn methodologies and tools so that we are better qualified and equipped to provide education, create projects on GBV, and answer the need of violence victims when they participate in our programmes services.

A primary aim of the project was to exchange our tools and methodologies during participatory meetings: 1) to share good practices among involved partners and 2) to learn new tools and methodologies. We have the most impact on these two objectives. We shared a broad range of methodologies, tools, knowledge on GBVWG, which included generating new knowledge on GBV in general and on the country profiles in relations to GBV. The following main methods/tools were successfully shared among partners:

Transactional Analysis (1st LTTA):

Agrado A. gave training on TA and its applied use for adult training. The training started with an introduction to the ‘Pragmatics of Human Communication’ by Paul Watzlawick. The training developed our competencies, notably strengthened our communicating skills, and we gained skills to prevent, recognise and fight emotional and psychological violence and manipulation. Besides, we could learn new training games, and we received valuable materials that we can use to make our educational programmes more inclusive for participants. The training part on emotional blackmailing, for instance, provided us with new knowledge, which we can build into other fields of our working areas, such as violence in schools, peer conflicts, gender equality.

Art workshops (1st and 2nd LTTTP):

We have the opportunity to gain insights on how to apply art-based workshops in non-formal education. First, Agrado A. shared the experience of presenting a documentary titled ‘The body of women ‘(Il corpo delle donne), which is about the representation of women in the media. They used to screen the film to teenage girls, followed by a facilitated discussion on it. Second, AWA, the polish association, introduced a documentary titled ‘Sisters’, which was produced in one of their previous projects. Both organisations shared their experience of using the films as a tool of empowerment.

#### Tools for women's empowerment

During the 2nd LTТА, АWA shared their project and experiences, which focused on empowering women; therefore, we received a complex program on women's empowerment approaches and tools. First, the АWA president talked about how the association supported local women politicians during the national elections in 2019. They also invited a guest to lecture on the experiences to organise a political protest, and we could hear the presentation by Katarzyna Majchrzak - leader of the 'Black protest Movement in Silesia Region'. We had an introduction to a Wendo training (with Agnieszka Biela) in order to get insight into a self-defence method that is developed specifically for women (Wen-Do classes focus on scenarios that often confront women, such as rape and domestic attacks). Finally, we visited an exhibition in Tychy city, the Silesian Art Factory and Muzeum, where the work by Marta Frey, a dedicated feminist artist, was presented. The Polish associate gave us a workshop based on the artworks. The theme of her exhibition was Art Against Patriarchy.

#### Digital storytelling (3rd LTТА):

Anthropolis gave a workshop for partners on the basics of doing DST and its use for dissemination, and Anthropolis also shared its experiences of using DST with vulnerable groups. Each partner shared the method of DST at their organisation and created DST videos. Altogether, five videos were produced and used for dissemination to communicate information on the project and to spread the news to local environments on the problem of GBV through real stories (DST videos).

#### Training on Modern Slavery (3rd LTТА):

Anthropolis gave a workshop on modern slavery and how to teach about this issue in formal school settings but using non-formal tools. By this workshop, we joined the events organised under the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, in Budapest. Therefore, this event was open to the public. As such, this workshop was an awareness-raising event on contemporary slavery.

#### Workshop by Crisis Ambulance (3rd LTТА):

A professional team of social workers and psychologists from the Hungarian Interchurch Aid, who run the crisis ambulance, gave an introductory workshop on necessary know-how on GBV (definition, factors, forms of violence, victim-blaming) and the processes of supporting victims. This workshop helped the participants learn how to engage victims and involve them in activities with respecting their experiences and needs.

#### Training on teaching teenagers about healthy/unhealthy relationship (3rd LTТА):

Anthropolis gave a training to introduce a teachers' manual, 'Heartbeat', preventing violence in intimate teenage relationships. The manual by NANE, a Hungarian women's NGO in 2008. An updated version of this training was discussed at our training.

### Field trips

Each partner organised a field trip to crisis centres, women shelters during the LTTAs. In Italy, we visited Lilith organisation, a regional crisis centre and Casa Matilda, a new shelter for women and children victims of violence. In Poland, we visited the Crisis Intervention Centers in Sosnowiec. In Budapest, we organised a field trip to a women's shelter managed by the Salvation Army. Due to the field trips to the various institutions during the LTTAs, we learned about the system, social network, and the deficiencies of these institutions in helping victims in times of crisis. This knowledge serves us to better design new project applications and better understand the needs of victims. This knowledge supports us to explore better the needs and target groups for a possible project plan.

### Internal workshops

All the partners organised an internal workshop (1/partner) for staff and volunteers to introduce the project results and discuss plans and possibilities for developing new projects on GBV.

A third objective of the project was to increase awareness of GBVWG in our societies. We communicated our project's goals and activities through online platforms (Online community channels, website). We created online campaigns for women's day, 16 days of activism, and during the lockdown in 2020 spring. We mainly shared information (statistics, helplines) related to domestic violence. Next to communicating the project, partners also found ways to share some of the methods and organised local workshops. Using DST and presenting statistics or news provided us with a good opportunity for deepening our knowledge in the media representation of WAV.

Finally, it was the aim of the project that we strengthen alliances at the regional, national and international level with entities that are fighting to counteract gender-based violence and abuse. First, within the consortium, we have developed new projects and received invitations from other entities outside the partnership. This project also allowed us to specify the field we would like to contribute to counteracting the violence against women in the future. So, each of the organizations could clarify the local needs and match their competencies to answer their needs. Second, it is of high importance for us that we could strengthen our network internationally and nationally. We could reinforce relationships or extend our network locally as well via those entities who were providing access to their institutions taking care of women victims. We also made contacts with other organizations via our activities, workshops. Due to these meetings and joint work, we have extended our network among those entities which provide support for the victims of GBV and educate professionals working in this field.

Above all the activities, the partnership organized and shared the following activities and events, exceeding the initial expectations, which all contributed to achieving the objectives:

#### Researching country-specific data on GBV (all LTTA)

Each partner did small-scale research and gave a presentation of a detailed county profile regarding GBV (specific statistics, laws and cases, awareness in society). To present the country profile regarding the state of the art of GBV, we collected several reports, studies, got familiar with statistical data and the specific issues related to the VAW. In this way, partners gained an updated knowledge and context analysis of their country profile, and also can discuss the different experiences of implementing methods, media coverage of actual cases, the process of implementing (see, i.e., Spain) of refusing the ratification (see, i.e. Hungary) the Istanbul convention. This constant learning on the nature of GBV and the specific statistical data regarding the countries turned out to be empowering for the organization in raising their voices in the field of GBV and adapting the learned methods mainly into their educational and other programmes of projects.

#### Training tools (All LTTPs and Final TM)

During our meetings, a broad range of training tools have been shared (i.e., team building activities, community building activities, tools for evaluation/reflection of a training day), which can be widely applied in our education works.

#### Workshop on writing new projects in the field of GBV (FinalTM)

An expert working at the NANE, a non-profit Women's Rights Association in Hungary, gave us a 2 hours long online workshop on the 2nd TM. The workshop provided to the partnership a wide range of and comprehensive knowledge and best practices for writing and implementing projects on joining international networks of professionals working in the field of GBV. This workshop notably supported the thinking on the sustainability of the project.

#### Organizing a fully online Final meeting

Finally, we gained experience in organizing and hosting a virtual online meeting. Due to the pandemic and lockdowns, we had first to cancel one of our participatory meetings. Then we had to organize the final meeting online. It challenged us to a great length but provided us with an opportunity to learn how to do a two-day long meeting online, which benefited all of the partners and, as it turned out, it provided an opportunity to host online workshops, meetings, webinars after that.

### **3. What we have gained, learn, experience from the project**

As coordinators, we highly benefited from managing this Erasmus+ KA2 project. First, this project gave us the opportunity to specify the field we would like to contribute to counteracting violence against women. We keep developing new project plans and new ways to carry on this issue in new projects. Secondly, we were introduced to a variety of new tools and methods. We can incorporate the methods and know-how learned in this project into other projects and works (providing training, developing training, accreditation of teachers' courses, workshops for youth). We gathered tools, methods that can provide a base for us to develop and deliver educational programs, workshops, etc., on the issue of GBV. Thirdly, it is of high importance for us that we could strengthen our network internationally and nationally. We have received invitations for new projects from within the consortium and from other entities. Also, we extended our network with those entities in Hungary who are the leading players in providing support for women. Finally, we gained experience in organizing and hosting a virtual online meeting. We are better equipped to organize an online meeting in the future (know-how).

We have particularly benefited from the following activities. The Transactional Analysis training significantly helped the personal development of those trainers/organizational people who participated. Not only it provided us to develop our competencies - it notably strengthened our communicating skills, but we could learn new training games, and we received valuable materials that we can use to make our educational programs more inclusive for participants. The training part on emotional blackmailing, for instance, provided us with new knowledge, which we can build into other fields of our working areas, such as violence in schools, peer conflicts, gender equality.

Digital storytelling is one of the main methods Anthropolis have used in the last ten years. It is a high interest for us to find out new ways to use this method. In this project, we gained new experiences on using DST for telling sensitive stories of vulnerable groups. In this project, we facilitated creating DST movies via online channels, which provided us with new knowledge and further ideas on the online methodology of teaching/sharing this method. This experience encourages us to develop and implement new online ways of using storytelling in the frameworks of non-formal education, awareness-raising and empowerment campaigns. The five DST films created within this project is a measure of success: each of them with its own way but is an example of empowering women experiencing violence and awareness-raising.

Thanks to the art workshop we received at the 2nd LTTP, we are looking for opportunities to incorporate art, creating art within the framework of non-formal education. As a result, we developed a workshop series for young girls and boys on 'healthy, non-violent intimate relationships', including creating posters, which we offer for local secondary schools.

We have fruitful experiences in using documentary films for education and community building. First, Agrado Association shared its experience presenting a documentary titled ‘The body of women’. They used to screen the film to teenage girls, followed by a facilitated discussion on it. Second, AWA, the polish association, introduced a documentary titled ‘Sisters’, which was produced in their previous project. Both organizations shared their experience of using the films as a tool of empowerment. We have decided to organize an event for screening the documentary ‘Sisters’, then decided to develop a workshop for youth (aged 14-26). We offer his workshop freely as long as the project runs. We plan to find ways and resources to keep offering this worktop (film screening + facilitated discussion) after the project ends.

Our association provided a workshop on Modern Slavery at the 3rd LTTP. We joined the events organized under the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence by giving this workshop. In the future, we plan to participate in this international event by organizing events related to GBV and attending other events to extend our networks, develop our know-how.

Due to the field trips to the various institutions during the LTTPs, we learned about the system, social network, and the deficiencies of these institutions in helping victims in times of crisis. This knowledge will serve us to design better new project applications and better understand the needs of victims of violence. This knowledge supports us to explore better the needs and target groups for a possible project plan.

As trainers, we are better equipped to recognize abusive, threatening situations and create a more inclusive environment when people with violent experience are present at training programs. We become more aware of the issues women and other vulnerable groups experience daily. At the same time, we are aware of where our limits are in supporting victims. The two main areas we can contribute to the fighting against the VAWG are women’s empowerment and the field of awareness-raising both at the local level and in the broader society.

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### **Further useful readings and media coverage on GBV in Hungary (in Hungarian)**

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