

MIND THE GAP!

**IMPROVING
INTERVENTION IN
INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE
AGAINST OLDER WOMEN**

It's never too late...

**The training materials for
the Police and Social Service**

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Introduction

Training materials contained in this handbook were prepared by the Polish team conducting the '*Mind the Gap!*' project, in consultation with the Voivodship Police Command in Białystok, the Faculty of Law of the University of Białystok, the Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology of the University in Białystok and the City Family Aid Centre in Białystok.

'*Mind the Gap!*' is a European project involving partners from Germany, UK, Hungary, Portugal, Austria and Poland. The project concentrates on the following issues:

- Gaining knowledge on the most efficient legal intervention procedures in judiciary institutions dealing with the problem of IPVOW.
- Increasing the awareness, in judiciary and social support institutions, of elderly women as victims of IPV.
- Encouraging institutions to perfect the actions they take to solve the problems of this group of victims of violence.
- Improving the effectiveness of actions and interventions undertaken by the judiciary and social aid institutions in cases of IPVOW.

In the earlier project *Intimate Partner Violence Against Older Women (IPVoW) (2010)* we found that the problem of IPV is very complex. It is often connected with the dynamics of ageing – a factor, which is not fully recognized or not sufficiently understood by judiciary and social support institutions.

The term “older women” refers to women aged 60 or more; “IPVoW” is understood as sexual, emotional, verbal, psychological and financial abuse, overbearing control and neglect, as well as physical violence.

The Polish research undertaken as part of the '*Mind the Gap!*' project was based on the study of 70 court cases involving violence against older women. They were all subject to quantitative and qualitative analysis. It complements workshops for practitioners, who encounter the problem of violence against the elderly in their work.

It would be well for the individual training materials to be presented in the context of the products of the '*Mind the Gap!*' project, available at the following addresses:

- [Polish Research Report](#)
- [Handbook for the police and social services](#)

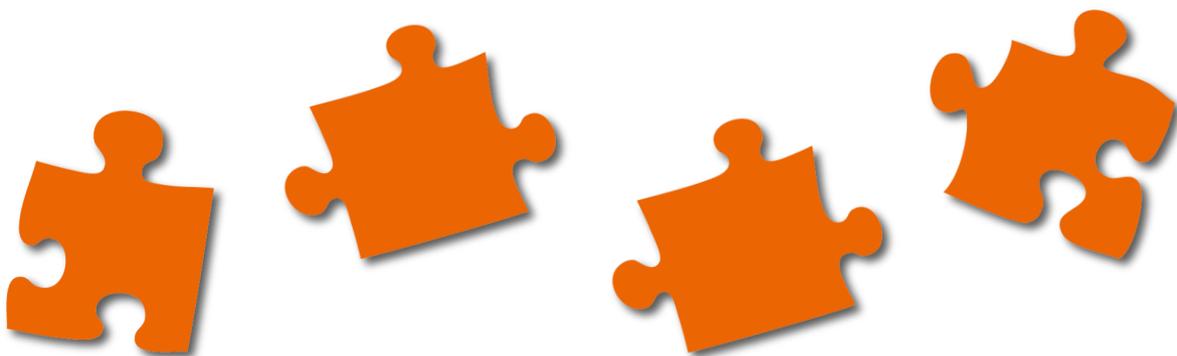
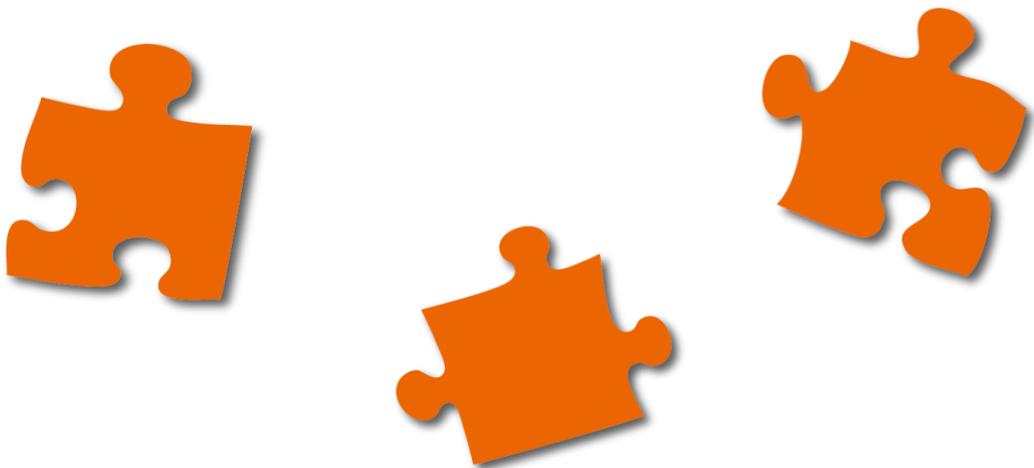


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Aims

The training materials contained in this document are the result of a training and research meeting titled „Violence against the Elderly”, which took place on the 26th October 2012 at the District Court in Białystok – a branch of the judiciary which has frequently to do with the problem of violence. The meeting had the aim of educating its participants in gerontology and the problems of violence. The goal was to improve the knowledge of people representing law enforcement and social services, who have to do with violence against the elderly, particularly women, on an everyday basis.

Violence against the elderly is common problem. It is complex and still poorly understood, because of the personal, intimate character of the situation of violence. The cases which reach the “end of the line” in court are but the tip of the iceberg. The problems of violence in its many forms are known to the judiciary, but in social sciences and humanities they are rarely discussed. Preventing and opposing violence requires the cooperation of a number of institutions – the police, the judiciary, social services, basic medical care, and research institutions. These institutions need to cooperate and constantly share information. The issue of internal communication remains insufficient in the context of constantly changing procedures.

Therefore, authorities were invited to the research and training meeting, who were involved in combating the problem of domestic violence (including violence against the elderly). These were representatives of the Ministry of Justice, the judiciary, scholars, members of the clergy, practitioners – social workers and psychotherapists. Their presentations discussed the problem of violence against the elderly from many angles and were – as it turned out to our great satisfaction - an introduction to a lively discussion of the current situation of the elderly victims of violence in the legal and legislative perspective, as well as in the spiritual and psychological aspect. This was in fact the intended aim of the meeting.

Participants:

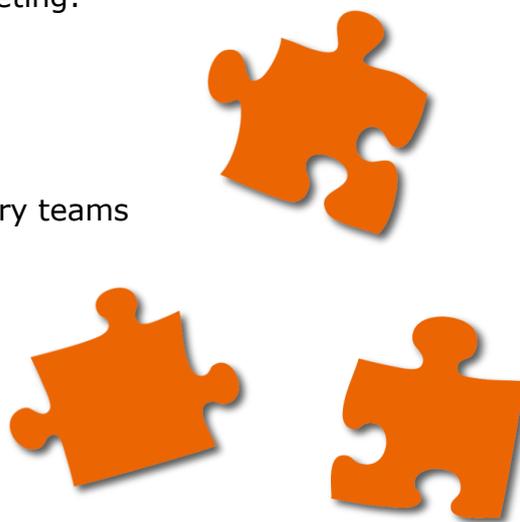
- **Tomasz Kałużny** – *President of the District Court in Białystok*
- **Prof. Małgorzata Halicka** – *gerontologist and sociologist, Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology, University of Białystok*
- **Prof. Katarzyna Laskowska** – *lawyer and criminologist, Faculty of Law, University of Białystok*
- **Ks. dr Dariusz Wojtecki** – *Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Major Seminary in Białystok*
- **Maria Kuźmicz MA** - *psychologist, coach, certified specialist in helping victims of domestic violence, Polish National „Blue Line” Helpline*
- **Agnieszka Górecka MA** – *City Family Aid Canter in Białystok*
- **Andrzej Augustyniak** – *prosecutor, Domestic Violence Prevention Committee, Ministry of Justice in Warsaw*
- **Prof. Wojciech Pędich** – *Honorary President of the Polish Gerontological Society*
- **Prof. Wioletta Danilewicz** – *Dean for Research, Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology, University of Białystok*
- **Prof. Agnieszka Malarewicz-Jakubów** – *Vice Dean for Extramural Studies, Faculty of Law, University of Białystok*

The main aim of the meeting and this document was to establish that there is a need for better, more efficient cooperation between institutions, because the problems encountered by practitioners stem not only from the law, which is supposed to prevent violence, but also from the details of cooperation between various institutions handling the problems of violence and cooperation between their employees and officers.

Taret Group

Following the intended aims, the material contained in this document is meant first of all for practitioners, who handle the problems of violence against the elderly, as well as people who encounter these problems in their work. The following groups took part in the training meeting:

- Prosecutors
- Judges
- Police constables
- Social workers
- Probation officers
- Members of interdisciplinary teams
- Members of the clergy
- General practitioners
- Lawyers
- Educators
- Psychologists
- Scholars
- Students



Abstract

Learning outcomes were developed in seven parts and are the effects of the activity of the members of the Polish project team, the involvement of the researchers performing court queries, the opinions of the speakers and the main points of their presentations, as well as the lively discussion between the representatives of the administration and practitioners, who encounter the problem of violence against the elderly in their work on an everyday basis.

Moderators:

- Prof. Katarzyna Laskowska – Faculty of Law, University of Białystok
- Grażyna Zawadzka-Lotko – Vice President of the District Court in Białystok

The following issues were discussed in the presentations:

- *Ks. dr Dariusz Wojtecki: **Dignity and Mission of the Elderly in Social Life in the Context of the Problem of Violence***
- *Prof. dr hab. Małgorzata Halicka: **The Elderly and Violence. Specific needs and recommended actions.***

- *Prosecutor Andrzej Augustyniak: **The Role of the Judiciary in the System of Aid for Families Facing the Problem of Violence.***
- *Maria Kuźmicz MA: **The Elderly in a Situation of Violence – a Psychological Perspective. Recommended Actions.***
- *Agnieszka Górecka MA: **The Cooperation for Services for the Prevention of Violence against the Elderly – Selected Problems***

To a large extent, the theses proposed by the speakers concerning behaviour in situations of violence consisted of information already known. However, it is important to stress what has to be remembered in working with the elderly victims of violence – that they are often ill, emotionally unstable, requiring of particular attention and a lot of kindness. It is also important to show the legal mechanisms, which allow to take steps against the perpetrators of violence and discussing the procedural problems connected with following the resolutions of the act on preventing violence.

The particular theses presented by the speakers are presented below, along with the expected learning outcomes.

Case study 1 and learning outcomes

Case study 1	
Introduction	<p><i>Ks. dr Dariusz Wojtecki: Dignity and Mission of the Elderly in Social Life in the Context of the Problem of Violence</i></p> <p>Delivering a paper including economic, social and demographic aspects of age and ageing; indicating the value, experience and wisdom of the elderly.</p>
Aim of the presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Presenting the social consequences of old age and ageing b. Age as a criterion of negative expression in the context of atheism c. Explosion of loneliness – the structure and scale of the problem among the elderly d. Political activity among the elderly e. Examples of the activity of the elderly – the role and particular place of an elderly person in social life
Discussion	<p>Discussion among the participants – on one hand representatives of state and local administration handling problems connected with violence against the elderly, on the other hand practitioners, who encounter the problem in their everyday work: police officers, social workers, probation officers.</p>

Learning outcomes

- 1.1 Showing a human treatment of the elderly – with dignity and respect
- 1.2 Bringing to light the social consequences of old age and ageing
- 1.3 Showing the role and the special place of the elderly in social life



Case Study 2 and learning outcomes

Case Study 2

Introduction

*Prof. dr hab. Malgorzata Halicka: **The Elderly and Violence. Specific needs and recommended actions.***

A paper presenting the results of research on violence against the elderly, including elderly women. Concentrating on the specific psychological and social needs of victims of violence, which are often the main obstacle to revealing their situation.

An audio-visual method was used, as one of the most interesting and effective methods of communication. The participants watched a fragment of a Polish film on the subject of violence against elderly women. The participants will remember the visualisation of violence against an elderly woman. This memory should prompt them to action.

Aim of the presentation

- a. Presenting the scale of the problem of violence against elderly women in Podlasie and in all of Poland.
- b. Characteristic of the forms of violence (such as neglect) experienced by the elderly
- c. Analysis of extreme cases and forms of violence against elderly women
- d. Presentation of the mechanisms of violence against elderly women.
- e. Presentation of the main reasons and conditions of violence against elderly women.
- f. Characteristic of the consequences of violence.
- g. Analysis of the specific needs of the elderly.
- h. Social and psychological factors hindering the victim from exposing her situation.
- i. Discussion of the barriers obstructing steps taken for the benefit of elderly victims of violence.

Case study

Women, 60 years old, married. In the fourth month of marriage her husband hit her for the first time. "(...) *Later, once he's had me enslaved, under control, I couldn't even resist. He would press my hands to the wall, spit me in the face. He knocked me over and waved the cleaver above my head. And he threatened me. And so I kept all these negative emotions bottled up inside me. And he raged. He had control over me and I couldn't defend myself.*"

Discussion

Discussion among the participants – on one hand representatives of state and local administration handling problems connected with violence against the elderly, on the other hand practitioners, who encounter the problem in their everyday work: police officers, social workers, probation officers.

The participants learned about the gerontological aspects of violence. A fragment of a very interesting film is used, presenting an elderly victim of violence, as well as an interview with an elderly female victim of violence, which were an interesting and stimulating introduction to the discussion.

Learning outcomes

- 2.1 Learning about the scale of the problem of violence against the elderly in Podlasie in all of Poland
- 2.2 Learning about the most frequent forms of violence experienced by the elderly (including elderly women).
- 2.3 Learning about the basic mechanisms of violence against elderly women.
- 2.4 Learning about the main reason and circumstances of violence against elderly women.
- 2.5 Learning about the specific needs of the elderly.
- 2.6 Recognizing the factors preventing the victim from revealing the violence she experiences.
- 2.7 Recognizing obstacles to helping elderly victims of violence.



Case study 3 and learning outcomes

Case study 3	
Introduction <i>Prosecutor Andrzej Augustyniak: The Role of the Judiciary in the System of Aid for Families Facing the Problem of Violence</i>	
A paper concentrating on a detailed characteristic of the role of law enforcement agencies in the system of help for families with a problem of violence, as detailed by the act of 29 July 2005 on preventing domestic violence	
Aim of the presentation	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Discussion of court verdict statistics in district courts in Poland in 2011b. Discussion of court verdict statistics in district courts in Poland in 2011 concerning art. 201 par. 1 of the penal codec. Domestic violence and the types of crimes in the penal coded. Legal qualification of punishable deeds of using violence or unlawful threats against familye. Legal change – new measures for separating the perpetrator from the victimf. Measures for separating the perpetrator from the victim in civil and criminal procedures and after the closing of criminal procedureg. Penalties ruled against perpetrators of domestic violence in a court procedureh. Probationary measures ruled against perpetrators of domestic violencei. Legal changes – new bases for ruling probationary measuresj. Ways of increasing the number of people directed from courts to correction and education programsk. Legal measures for the protection of victims of crimel. Description of the “Blue Card” procedure
Discussion	
Discussion among the participants – on one hand representatives of state and local administration handling problems connected with violence against the elderly, on the other hand practitioners, who encounter the problem in their everyday work: police officers, social workers, probation officers.	

Learning outcomes

- 3.1 Learning about court verdict statistics in district courts in Poland in 2011 concerning art. 201 par. 1 of the penal code
- 3.2 Learning about legal qualification of punishable deeds of using violence or unlawful threats against family
- 3.3 Learning about new measures for separating the perpetrator from the victim
- 3.4 Learning about measures for separating the perpetrator from the victim in civil and criminal procedures and after the closing of criminal procedure
- 3.5 Learning about penalties and probationary measures ruled against perpetrators of domestic violence in a court procedure
- 3.6 Learning about legal changes concerning new bases for ruling probationary measures
- 3.7 Learning about ways of increasing the number of people directed from courts to correction and education programs
- 3.8 Learning about legal measures for the protection of victims of crime
- 3.9 Learning about (reminding) the "Blue Card" procedure

Case study 4 and learning outcomes

Case Study 4
<p>Introduction</p> <p><i>Maria Kuźmicz MA: The Elderly in a Situation of Violence – a Psychological Perspective. Recommended Actions.</i></p> <p>A paper presenting a psychological perspective on the experiencing of violence by the elderly. An experiment with elements of psycho-drama. An attempt to symbolically enter the experience of an elderly victim of violence. The participants followed the instructions of the group moderator.</p>
<p>Activities (workshop)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">a. The moderator asked the participants to divide a piece of paper into four parts.b. On each of the four pieces of paper the participants wrote one value that is important for them in their lives.c. Some of the participants completed the task quickly, automatically, some after deep thought.d. Participants who completed the task lifted up their cards. They returned them trustingly, with smiles on their faces.e. The moderator passed by indifferent to the cards offered to her, sometimes she took them aggressively (both behaviours were intended) angrily tearing them to pieces in front of their authors. She did not even read some of them, destroying them without paying attention to their contents.f. Many of the participants were offended, hurt, seeing the values important for them, brutally "destroyed".g. The moderator asked them how they felt, what their impressions were, what they felt.

- h. There was a free discussion about the feelings of the "hurt" participants.
- i. The emotions mentioned included: surprise, being left out, fear, rebellion.
- j. The moderator explained that this is violence in a symbolic sense – it comes and takes away the most important values; sometimes it is done subtly; it does not ask before entering various spheres of our life; it extends to the whole family.

Discussion

Discussion among the participants – on one hand representatives of state and local administration handling problems connected with violence against the elderly, on the other hand practitioners, who encounter the problem in their everyday work: police officers, social workers, probation officers.

Learning outcomes

- 4.1 An attempt to symbolically enter the situation of an elderly victim of violence.
- 4.2 Learning about the forms of violence experienced by the elderly.
- 4.3 Learning about the characteristics of victim and perpetrator of violence and accompanying phenomena.
- 4.4 Recognizing what violence is.
- 4.5 Recognizing the need to treat elderly victims of violence with humanity, dignity and respect.
- 4.6 Recognizing that we as a society, practitioners, but also parents, as those who have grandparents and those who will one day be old, have to remember the specifics and values of old age.

Case study 5 and learning outcomes

Case Study 5

Introduction

*Agnieszka Górecka MA: **The Cooperation for Services for the Prevention of Violence against the Elderly – Selected Problems***

A paper presenting the procedures of cooperation between various services for preventing violence against the elderly. A characteristic of the system of preventing violence (introduced by the act of 2005 on the prevention of domestic violence and its update of 2010) in the context of creating Interdisciplinary Teams. The rules of functioning of Interdisciplinary Teams.

Case study 5 and 6 are similar. Training consisted of discovering the differences and similarities in intervention methods, the use of procedures and cooperation between institutions handling the problem of violence against the elderly.

Case presentation

Woman, aged 60, lives with her son. Her son receives a permanent benefit from the social aid centre. He regularly abuses alcohol. When under the influence, he becomes aggressive. He uses vulgar and abusive language. He threatens his mother with death. He pushes her, hits her, and twists her arms. He frequently

refuses to let her into the flat. He takes away her pension and spends it on alcohol. Neighbours frequently notified that she spends the night on the staircase, that she is beaten and in tears. They said that he forces her to gather cigarette butts, buy alcohol from an illegal source. There were also reports that she goes hungry. She is clearly afraid of something. She defends her son. When she had been beaten, she claims she had fallen over. She never calls the police. It is always the neighbours who do this. In February 2011 the Blue Card procedure was initiated by the local Police Station. Social workers and the local constable visited the family. They conducted intervention interviews. In March 2012 the Family Aid Centre notified the City Commission for Solving Alcohol Related Problems. The case is in progress. In April 2012 dining is suggested. At the same time the director of the centre notifies the prosecutor's office, because the victim did not want to do it. In August 2012 the case is remitted due to the victim's health problems. She was in hospital. This was the only reason, the only way to change the situation. A motion was filed with the court to place her in Social Aid Home without her agreement. She was accepted into one and this ended the horror she had lived through.

Actions

Discussion among the participants – on one hand representatives of state and local administration handling problems connected with violence against the elderly, on the other hand practitioners, who encounter the problem in their everyday work: police officers, social workers, probation officers.

Learning outcomes

- 5.1 Presenting the legal mechanisms which lead to taking steps against the perpetrators of violence.
- 5.2 Presenting and discussing procedural problems connected with following the act on preventing violence.
- 5.3 Recognizing the barriers which may prevent a victim from revealing the violence she experiences.
- 5.4 Presenting a strategy of communicating with elderly female victims of violence.
- 5.5 Explaining the importance of the first contact with a victim.
- 5.6 Discussing the validity and effectiveness of using certain procedures predicted by the act on the prevention of violence.



Case study 6 and learning outcomes

Case Study 6

Introduction

*Agnieszka Górecka MA: **The Cooperation for Services for the Prevention of Violence against the Elderly – Selected Problems***

A paper presenting the procedures of cooperation between various services for preventing violence against the elderly. A characteristic of the system of preventing violence (introduced by the act of 2005 on the prevention of domestic violence and its update of 2010) in the context of creating Interdisciplinary Teams. The rules of functioning of Interdisciplinary Teams.

Case study 5 and 6 are similar. Training consisted of discovering the differences and similarities in intervention methods, the use of procedures and cooperation between institutions handling the problem of violence against the elderly.

Case presentation

July 2011, home intervention. The Blue Card procedure is initiated. Daughter, 63, mother, 90. They run a common household. Their son/grandson has his own household. The women are both in poor health, but receive pensions. The grandson is unemployed with no benefit. Even though he has a separate household, the women help him by providing food and a room in their flat. He has no income of his own and does not provide for them. They are both abused physically and emotionally. In June 2012 they notified the authorities. The court issued a one-year sentence, suspended for three years. It also required him to be treated in a closed institution. In January 2012 the mother approached a team of social workers and notified them that since December her son had been abusing alcohol and had become aggressive. She said she was afraid for herself and her mother. Therefore, the Blue Card procedure was initiated. She was informed about the possibility of receiving help, which she received at the Crisis Intervention Centre. A social worker and the local constable went to research the situation in the community. They find that the man is in treatment and all has been quite in the household for a month. However, in August 2012 the mother informs that he stopped attending meetings and individual therapy. Additionally, in September he was severely inebriated, not knowing about a probation officer's visit. The probation officer filed for the suspended sentence to be carried out. This naturally led to an improvement in the perpetrator's behaviour. In October he started work. He attends therapy.

Actions

Discussion among the participants – on one hand representatives of state and local administration handling problems connected with violence against the elderly, on the other hand practitioners, who encounter the problem in their everyday work: police officers, social workers, probation officers.

Learning outcomes

- 6.1 Presenting the legal mechanisms which lead to taking steps against the perpetrators of violence.
- 6.2 Presenting and discussing procedural problems connected with following the act on preventing violence.
- 6.3 Recognizing the barriers which may prevent a victim from revealing the violence she experiences.
- 6.4 Presenting a strategy of communicating with elderly female victims of violence.
- 6.5 Explaining the importance of the first contact with a victim.
- 6.6 Discussing the validity and effectiveness of using certain procedures predicted by the act on the prevention of violence.

Open discussion

Spontaneous discussion among the participants – on one hand representatives of state and local administration handling problems connected with violence against



the elderly, on the other hand practitioners, who encounter the problem in their everyday work: police officers, social workers, probation officers.

Learning outcomes

- 4.1 Showing the need for rational and effective penal policy against perpetrators of violence.
- 4.2 Indicating that the perpetrators should not only be imprisoned (although they certainly deserve it), but that they should also be treated – alcohol treatment, correction of attitude, emotion control.
- 4.3 Showing that the repressive aspect of the law should be enforced but also complemented with preventive and educational aspects, for the perpetrator to return to society and function properly in it.
- 4.4 Showing the officers and employees of institutions working towards the prevention of violence that there is a need to rationally inform victims that they have rights, that they should not be afraid to reveal situations of violence, that law is on their side, but also show that not all of their expectations can be met.
- 4.5 Noticing that the existing legal measures can be used more effectively – punitive and educational measures, which can be applied by courts and prosecutors.

Recommendation and advice

The following advice and recommendations were formulated during intense, often spontaneous, discussion among the participants:

- As evidence is being gathered by the authorities (police, prosecution) particular attention should be paid to the elderly as **victims**
- When a sentence is issued, the court should more frequently make use of the possibility of sending the perpetrator to obligatory correctional and educational groups for **perpetrators** of violence
- There should be more cooperation with **health care workers** (doctors, nurses)
- The authority and role of the **Church** in Poland should be used for promoting good practice of dignified life for the elderly in their families
- **Educational** efforts (trainings) should be made in relation to gerontology and violence against the elderly in their homes
- Authorities should cooperate with **children and young adults** for trans-generational solidarity (at schools and universities)
- Generational **cooperation** should be promoted (through schools, foundations)
- **Awareness** should be raised of the specifics of old age and the **responsibility** for making decisions involving the elderly

It is difficult to diagnose the forms of violence against the elderly. The problem is a serious one and at the same time poorly analysed. Therefore, any initiative in this area is worthy of respect and support. The research and training meeting was also necessary to show both to scholars and practitioners the sense and meaning of the problem of violence against the elderly.

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