

## About Mental Health Europe

Mental Health Europe (MHE) is an international non-profit organization established in 1985 and recognized under Belgian law. MHE aims to promote positive mental health, prevent mental health problems, improve mental health care and advocate for the human rights of mental health service users.

MHE represents associations, organizations and individuals active in the field of mental health and well-being in Europe, including (ex)users of mental health services, volunteers and professionals of many disciplines. MHE currently has 67 member organizations in 30 European countries and 72 individual members.

Through its activities and programs, Mental Health Europe has been playing an important role in combating the taboos, stigma and prejudice associated with mental illness, while fighting for the social inclusion of all persons with mental health problems.

### A project led by Mental Health Europe in partnership with:

- Pro Mente Upper Austria, Austria
- Advocacy Group for the Mentally Ill, Cyprus
- Advocacy France, France
- The Romanian League for Mental Health, Romania
- Slovenian Association for Mental Health, Slovenia

For more information, please go to:

<http://trainimprovereduce.wordpress.com/>  
[http://www.mhe-sme.org/our-projects/current-projects/train\\_improve\\_reduce.html](http://www.mhe-sme.org/our-projects/current-projects/train_improve_reduce.html)

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# Train, Improve, Reduce!

Diminish the mental health and psychological consequences of violence against women by dismantling prejudices of law enforcement agents

Prompted by the knowledge that every fifth woman in Europe has been subjected to intimate partner violence, this project, carried out by Mental Health Europe (MHE) and its partners, is a unique attempt to provide police officers with much needed information on the mental health aspects associated to domestic violence. As law enforcement agents are the first contacts of women denouncing intimate partner violence, it is fundamental to raise awareness of the problems involved in dealing with victims of domestic abuse, and above all, to improve the ability of the police to perceive and respond to the victims' mental health needs.

## Why Train, Improve, Reduce?

According to the Council of Europe, 45% of all women in the European Union have suffered from violence perpetrated by men, while it is estimated that every fifth woman has been subjected to domestic violence. It is therefore clear that violence against women is a grave social problem which inflicts massive psychological damage.

## Considering mental health

Unofficial data highlights the fact that a great number of women experiencing violence do not denounce their aggressors, as they feel uncomfortable speaking about what has been, or is being done to them. Shame, guilt or intimidation are causing these

women to keep the tales of their traumas to themselves, as victims often fear being either judged or not taken seriously by police officers. However, not revealing the acts of domestic violence can cause severe mental health problems for the abused women.

The mental health aspect of intimate partner violence has already been successfully addressed in the training of general practitioners. Still, this aspect needs to be reinforced in the case of police staff.

Professionals need to have a thorough knowledge of the problems entailed in dealing with victims of domestic violence in order to provide appropriate help. Moreover, they must also be able to draw on comprehensive resources of information which they can then pass on to the victims.

## Project objectives

- to provide cross-cultural and gender-sensitive information on the mental health aspects of violence towards women
- to develop training modules which our partners will use to train law enforcement agents who deal with abused women, promoting an adequate response to this issue.
- to promote an adequate attitude of police officers when dealing with victims of domestic abuse

## Duration

January 2011 to December 2012

## Activities and outcomes

During the first year, we will conduct research and assess existing practices and initiatives across Europe on the consequences of domestic violence on mental health, and on the types of training police are already receiving on the topic of domestic violence.

Based on our findings, we will develop targeted training modules for law enforcement agents, focusing specifically on the impact of domestic violence on mental health. The modules are meant to increase the police officers' understanding of the complex dynamic of domestic violence and the reasons why women remain in violent relationships. By providing information on both the impact on the victim's mental health and the legal basis for police intervention, we believe the trainings will improve the skills necessary for law enforcement agents to provide effective help to the abused women.

During the second year of the project, our partners will conduct the said trainings in their respective countries. We will then analyze the outcomes of the training sessions, and compile a handbook which will showcase examples of good practices and provide information that could be used for similar activities in the future. A series of policy recommendations, along with the project outcomes, will also be presented at the final conference in the fall of 2012. Both the handbook and the policy recommendations will be available in seven European languages.