

**Report from Serbia  
World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2011  
“My World...Your World... Our World  
– Free of Elder Abuse”**

**On Wednesday, on 15th June 2011, from 12.00 to 14.30, in the Conference Hall of the Red Cross of Serbia, a special panel was held on the occasion of the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2011**

The panel called "My World .... Your World ... Our World ... World without Elder Abuse " was organized by the Serbian Red Cross and CSO Network “HumanaS”.

This event and discussion were a continuation of efforts of HumanaS to improve the situation of older people and to reduce discrimination, neglect, abuse and violence against older people.

The panel was opened by the Secretary General of the Serbian Red Cross, Ms. Vesna Milenovi\_, and State Secretary at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Mr. Zoran Martinovic. The event was used to present the results of recent research carried out by Red Cross and HumanaS and entitled "Violence against the Elderly in the Family Context". The results were presented by the main researcher, Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, Prof. Nevena Petrusic, (the Research was an activity in the EC IPA project "Older People Civil Society Dialogue in the Western Balkans" implemented in partnership with AGE UK and partners from Albania and BIH).



The study collected and analyzed data related to reported cases of domestic violence against older people in 2010, in police departments in the area of \_\_Nis and Novi Sad, as well as those registered in the social welfare centers in the two cities. The Study included two prosecuted cases of violence against older people and the cases that had a court epilogue. The aim of the Research was to identify problems in the functioning of existing mechanisms of legal protection from domestic violence and providing psychosocial support to victims of violence. Recommendations for efficient functioning of the Institutions in charge of protection of older people will be sent to the relevant ministries.

According to the police headquarters in Novi Sad, 286 crimes of domestic violence were committed. Total number of victims was 309. In 31 reported cases family members committed violence against persons aged 65 and over (10.8%), the total number of such victims was - 34 (11%)

Center for Social Work of Novi Sad recorded 44 families in which violence was committed; 79 members were victims- no age structure was recorded.

Courts have imposed 32 measures of protection against domestic violence - no data on the age structure of victims and perpetrators.

The oldest victim was 81.

The age structure of the perpetrators of violence against the elderly:

- Most were from 35-45 years old
- 6 perpetrators were 65 or older (5 men and 1 woman)

The oldest offender was a man (husband), 77 years old, while the youngest (the grandson) was 26.

When the information from Nis is concerned the results were as follows:

Police Department in Nis records: 215 criminal acts of domestic violence were committed; the total number of victims was 238; 26 crimes were committed against family member of 65 age or older (10.92%)

The age structure of older persons as victims: victims' average age was 72 years and 3 months (eight victims over 80 years of age, among them five women, of whom the oldest was 87 years old).

The average age of perpetrators of violence against elderly people was 45 years and 8 months.

Compared to the average age of victims which is 72 years and 3 months, the perpetrators of violence were on average younger than their victims for 26 years and five months.

Violence against older people was committed by children in 48.38% cases, while in 25.80% violence was committed by partners and other family members. Violence, 93.35% in Nis and 87.42% in Novi Sad, was committed at home – in a house or an apartment where older persons lived.

Brankica Jankovic, director of the Gerontology Center of Belgrade, spoke about human security and pointed out that the most common sources of security risks and threats for older people are: abuse, fraud, fire, theft.

The major threats in the institutions caring for older people are: infection from an epidemic (food as a source of threat), performance of specific tasks (faults, explosion, poisoning ...), specific forms of threats (the possibility of terrorist acts, bomb alert, unauthorized use of user files in order to blackmail the data from these documents and similar.)

Dr. Slavica Golubovic from the Gerontology Center of Belgrade in her presentation pointed out that many people suffer multiple abuses and it is assumed that 1- 14 cases get registered. In institutional residences causes of abuse and neglect are: overburdened staff, burnout syndrome, insufficient staff, insufficient education, lack of material compensation.

Dr. Marija Tasic from the Institute of Gerontology emphasized the role of health professionals in the prevention of elder abuse and the necessity of screening the population older than 60 years.

Mr. Nada Satari\_ NGO Amity spoke about the prevention of discrimination and abuse from the perspective of the New Law on Social Protection and on how the Law could help to reduce discrimination against older people, or in some cases increase it. *“As the organizations dealing with prevention and lobbying for the rights of older people, we are particularly interested in Article 84 “Exercising the right to financial assistance”. In order to achieve the right to financial social assistance, older person must first sue to the court family member or relatives that do not help financially, and only with the final verdict may demand social assistance. Will our elderly to be willing to sue their children or relatives?”*



The panel concluded that dealing with the problem of violence against older people should apply multidisciplinary and multispectral approach, with emphasis on extensive new research, education of professionals, family members and others who care for the elderly.

It takes the necessary preventative actions, sensitization: professionals, volunteers, older people themselves, the media and general public.

It is essential that institutions at the local level coordinate their work and cooperate in the area of older people care.

It takes a team approach of professionals from the Centre for Social Welfare, the police and the judiciary to effectively act.

The panel discussion had around fifty participants (some of them were older people) and was well covered by media, Vecernje Novosti, Dnevnik, Studio B, Tanjug, Pregled all written about it and broadcasted footage.

Starting 15<sup>th</sup> of June, HumanaS volunteers all over Serbia will be handing out leaflets aimed.

As a follow up and continuation of our efforts, a Round Table on Treaty on Life Support, will take place on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2011.



