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Unseen Victims: Understanding the Impact of Domestic Violence on Children and Adolescents - Implications for Policy, Research and Practice
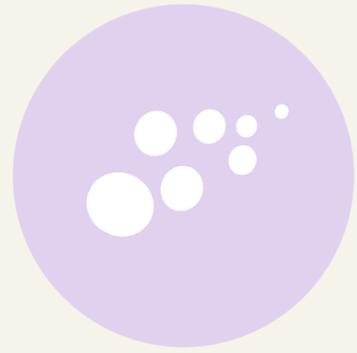
Project Domestic Violence and Safe Housing

- Research project of the University of Applied Sciences Leipzig
- Project management: Prof. Dr. Rüdiger Wink, Faculty of Business Administration
- Goal: Establishment of an interdisciplinary research center
  - Bundling the experience of the social work sciences, economics, architecture, technical faculties
  - Developing cooperation with local and regional municipal sponsors, civil society initiatives and companies

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Introduction

- Across Europe an estimated one in four women will experience domestic violence in their lifetime. Despite efforts to address this problem, it remains a significant challenge for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers.

- Surpassing the number of adult women in shelters in Germany is the number of children.

- The COVID-19 pandemic has further intensified stress factors for affected children, increasing the risk of maltreatment and violence.

- Consequently, there is a crucial need for adequate support to prevent long-term consequences
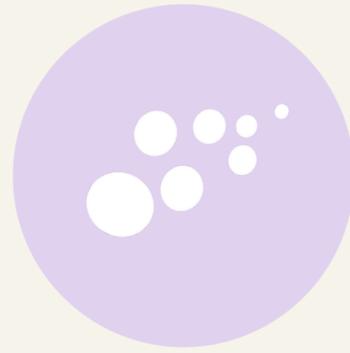
Domestic Violence in Germany

- 2022: 157.550 (2021: 144.044; +9,4%) registered cases of domestic violence

- victims were 80,1 % (126.349) female and 19,9 % male (31.469)

- most of the women who are victims of DV live in those relationships together with their children

- most of the children are in some way involved, either witnessing the violence or being abused themselves

Impacts on children and youth

Short term

- anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues

- difficulty sleeping, eating, and concentrating

Long term

- higher risk of developing behavioral problems, substance abuse issues, engaging in violent behavior

- profound impact on a child's development: emotional regulation, social skills, academic achievement, also distorted view of relationships and struggle to form healthy attachments later in life

Sources: Smith-Marek, Erika N./Cafferky, Bryan/Dharnidharka, Prerana/Mallory, Allen B./Dominguez, María/High, Jessica/Stith, Sandra M./Mendez, Marcos (2015): Effects of Childhood Experiences of Family Violence on Adult Partner Violence: A Meta-Analytic Review. In: J Fam Theory Rev 7, H. 4, S. 498–519. / Carter, Bethan/Paranjothy, Shantini/Davies, Alisha/Kemp, Alison (2022): Mediators and Effect Modifiers of the Causal Pathway Between Child Exposure to Domestic Violence and Internalizing Behaviors Among Children and Adolescents: A Systematic Literature Review. In: Trauma, violence & abuse 23, H. 2, S. 594–604. / Kindler, Heinz (2013): Partnergewalt und Beeinträchtigungen kindlicher Entwicklung: Ein aktualisierter Forschungsüberblick. In: Kavemann, Barbara (Hrsg.): Handbuch Kinder und häusliche Gewalt. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, S. 27-47.

Implications · What is needed?

Research/Data

- Unified Documentation
- Psychological stress
- Evaluation
- Children's own perspectives
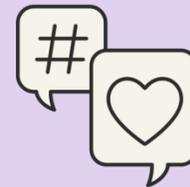
Practice

- interdisciplinary networking
- trauma pedagogy
- participatory approaches

Policy

- Commitment to the Istanbul convention
- Raising awareness
- Long-term and stable funding

We are looking for collaborators!

Potential collaborates: Civil society organizations, including international institutions, as well as national and local authorities.

Our Objectives

- Report on mental health of children as witnesses of DV and best practice report on interventions

- Survey and documentation of the children and women in the participating women's shelters

- Systematic and standardized recording of psychological stress

- Development, implementation and evaluation of a participative psychoeducational group intervention

- Systematic and standardized recording of the effects and evaluation of the developed services

- Foster collaboration among networks

- Dissemination of the research findings to relevant stakeholders and public

Methodology

Comprehensive data collection	• Literature search • Survey of the women and children in the shelters • Survey of their psychological stress
Facilitation of a workshop for stakeholders in the intervention system	• Establishment of collaborative networks • sharing of experiences • collaboratively identify key areas for the group program
Collaborative design of group intervention sessions	• Follow-up Workshop for the development of a prototype for a group session • On the basis of the literature review, data of the survey and input from the workshops development of a participative psychoeducational group intervention • Test and Refine
Dissemination	• Development and execution of digital information sessions for national, regional, and local authorities • Utilize social media platforms, press releases, and targeted awareness campaigns to disseminate information and promote public understanding of the impact of DV

Targeted Output

Comprehensive report on knowledge and best practices on children as witnesses of DV

Improved data on documentation and psychological stress of children as witnesses of DV

Development of a specialized participative psychoeducational group offer

Increased Awareness of public authorities as well as the general public
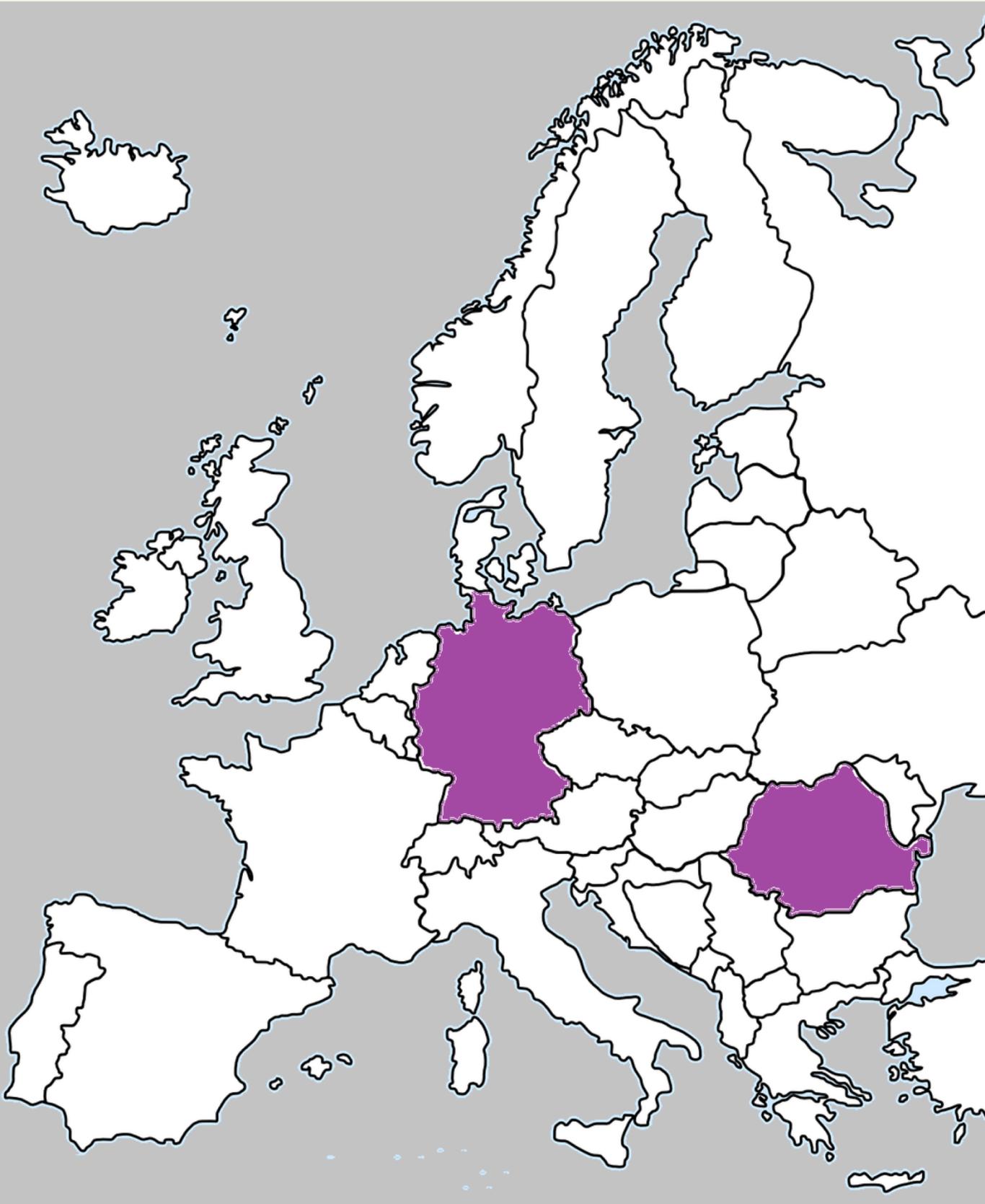
Next steps and collaboration

- Deadline of the call: end of 2023

- Collaborative application for the CERV Program

- Collaborates: HTWK Leipzig, Germany and P1 – DGASPC HR, Romania

- Further collaboration targeted: : Civil society organizations and national and local authorities