

POLICY BRIEF

INCLUSIVE HOLISTIC CARE FOR MIGRANT VICTIMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE (INHeRE project 2019 – 2021)

KEY RESULTS

4 practice-improving tools

Triage Tool for identification, care and referral of victims of sexual violence at European asylum reception and accommodation initiatives

Good Practice Tool for police hearings with migrant, applicant for international protection, refugee (MAR) victims of sexual violence and trafficking

Upgraded international remote interpreting system, including checklist

Safe reporting procedure for (undocumented) migrant victims of sexual violence

2 capacity-building trainings

Massive Open Online Course: "Sexual Violence & Migration"

Practice-oriented Training-of-Trainers: "Sexual violence & Migration"

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Equip professionals in the asylum sector with good-practice tools

Ensure training in sexual violence in the context of migration

Train and support Immigration Officials in trauma-informed interview techniques

Train interpreters on sexual violence, culture-sensitive and trauma-informed language

Put protocols in place to prevent sexual violence in asylum reception centres

Contextualization

In the European Union, up to 58% of female migrants and up to 32% of male migrants have experienced sexual victimization. Adopting an integrated and holistic approach, encompassing forensic, medical and psychosocial care, from detection to follow-up has been recognized as the best care for all victims of sexual violence, including victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. However, **access** to holistic **care** for migrant victims is **hampered** by a broad range of **barriers**.

Frontline professionals working with migrant victims of sexual violence, often **lack** the **specialist knowledge**, **language skills** and **tools** to provide inclusive and holistic care for migrant victims, or do not know where to refer them. There is a need to build **capacity** among key professionals working with migrant victims of sexual violence through training, provision of **tailored tools** and development of **streamlined care pathways** in order to address gaps in all aspects of care from identification to follow-up.

Objectives

To address this need, the INHeRE project aimed to:

- **Build knowledge** and refine culturally-competent **skills** and **practices** of 5 key professional groups working with MAR through online and on-site training;
- **Align** national **policies** with EU regulations and guidelines for safe reporting of sexual violence regardless of legal status;
- **Bridge** competences, practices and policies **across professions** in order to streamline care pathways for MAR victims.

The project targeted **five professional groups**: (1) staff working in asylum reception centres, (2) staff working in sexual assault centres, (3) psychologists, (4) intercultural mediators and interpreters, and (5) police officers and law enforcement officials.

A participatory approach

A participatory approach was applied through the involvement of victims, representatives from migrant and victim support organisations, and professionals via an **Implementation and Community Advisory Board** (ICAB). An ICAB was established in each partner country and gathered every 4 months to review progress and outputs and provide feedback and direction.

Project consortium

The project consortium comprised Ghent University: International Centre for Reproductive Health (ICRH) & Centre for the Social Study of Migration and Refugees (CESSMIR) (BE); the Belgian Federal Service of Public Health (BE); Payoke (BE); Victim Support Europe (EU); NHS, The Havens Sexual Assault Referral Centre (UK) and the Irish Department of Justice (IE).



Policy recommendations

According to Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (2014), all victims regardless of their gender, sexual orientation or legal status, should be able to **access** and **benefit** from **holistic care** after experiencing sexual violence.

Building on the key findings of the INHeRE project, the consortium advises the following recommendations:

① Equip all frontline professionals working in the asylum sector (including accommodation, service provision, legal support services, etc.) with good-practice tools to assist them in the identification, care and referral of migrant victims of sexual violence.

Professionals working in the asylum sector can contribute to the identification and recovery of victims who have experienced sexual violence by recognizing signs, providing appropriate care and referring to specialist services. To do so, they should be encouraged to refine their approach, build knowledge and develop their skills.

To assist professionals in noticing behaviours that are potentially indicative of sexual victimization, it is recommended to promote and implement good-practice tools such as the “Triage Tool”, developed by the INHeRE consortium.

Recommended tool: Triage Tool for identification, care and referral of victims of sexual violence at European asylum reception and accommodation initiatives.

Available at: <https://bit.ly/2ZPLWlm> [ENG, NL, FR, IT]

② Ensure initial (before job enrollment) and ongoing, on the floor training in sexual violence in the context of migration, is provided to all frontline professionals working in the asylum sector (including accommodation, service provision, legal support services, etc.).

To meet the unique needs of migrant victims of sexual violence, training of professionals is key. As part of the INHeRE project, a comprehensive online course, “Sexual Violence & Migration”, was developed and piloted with over 150 European professionals. Evaluation demonstrated that professionals’ knowledge increased significantly, remaining higher 6 months following the course. The online modules are available free of charge in English, French, Dutch and Italian.

Recommended training: Free online course (8 modules): “Sexual Violence & Migration”

Available at: <https://bit.ly/2ZPLWlm> [ENG, NL, FR, IT]

③ Train and support Immigration Officials in implementing trauma-informed interview techniques to improve the experiences of victims and outcomes of asylum assessments.

Trauma can trigger behaviours that may be misunderstood by professionals assessing applications for international protection, thereby hindering successful investigations and causing further harm to victims. Therefore, Immigration Officials should be trained and supported in trauma-informed practices and techniques to communicate with traumatized applicants for international protection.

The “Good Practice Tool”, developed by the INHeRE consortium, explains how trauma works and provides guidelines on how to conduct interviews in a trauma-informed way.

Recommended tool: Good Practice Tool for police hearings with migrant, applicant for international protection, refugee (MAR), trafficked, and LGBT+ victims of sexual violence.

Available at: <https://bit.ly/2ZPLWlm> [ENG, NL, FR, IT]

④ **Train certified interpreters working in the asylum sector (including accommodation, service provision, legal support services, etc.) and for the national Immigration Office on sexual violence, and culture-sensitive and trauma-informed language.**

Interpreters play a key role in helping professionals and migrants to overcome language barriers. Interpreting for migrant victims requires knowledge on sexual violence as well as familiarity with taboos, colloquial terms, sensitive phrasing and terminology.

Recommended training: Free online course (8 modules): “Sexual Violence & Migration”

Available at: <https://bit.ly/2ZPLWlm> [ENG, NL, FR, IT]

Recommended tool: Good Practice Tool for police hearings with migrant, applicant for international protection, refugee (MAR), trafficked, and LGBT+ victims of sexual violence.

Available at: <https://bit.ly/2ZPLWlm> [ENG, NL, FR, IT]

⑤ **Put protocols in place to prevent sexual violence within accommodation and asylum services.**

The design of the physical space, training and supervision of staff and the practical organisation of accommodation and asylum services may contribute to the prevention and reduction of exposure to sexual violence. A checklist to assess these elements in accommodation and asylum services is included in the “Triage Tool”, developed by the INHeRE consortium.

Recommended tool: Triage Tool for identification, care and referral of victims of sexual violence at European asylum reception and accommodation initiatives.

Available at: <https://bit.ly/2ZPLWlm> [ENG, NL, FR, IT]

Contact details

Triage Tool for identification, care and referral of victims of sexual violence at European asylum reception and accommodation initiatives.

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Good Practice Tool for police hearings with migrant, applicant for international protection, refugee (MAR), trafficked, and LGBT+ victims of sexual violence

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Find more information on INHeRE and its findings [here](#).



