



## **PACT - Promoting Awareness for Cooperation and Training in the Field of Domestic Violence**

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### **Abstract**

*Implementing Blended Learning for the Use in Training and Further. Training Courses for Professionals in the Field of Domestic Violence*

*Violence against women crosses all socio-economic levels, age, groups, races, religions and countries. Numerous studies have been published that document the prevalence of domestic violence and its serious effects on women and children. PACT is funded by the European Commission to sustainably improve competences in the area of violence against women and children in different institutional environments on a European level. PACT addresses professionals in education and vocational training as multipliers as well as in various services offered to victims such as medical and psychological care, shelter, legal consultancy and empowerment.*

*The PACT consortium consisting of partners from Germany, Austria, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Poland and Portugal has developed a training kit which is designed for use in training and further training courses for professionals in various fields. It includes fundamental information on the issue of domestic violence which are relevant for all vocational groups as well as more detailed information for professionals who actually deal with domestic violence.*

*The PACT training is based on a combination of technology-based materials and face-to-face sessions used together to deliver instruction. The online modules are designed as self-learning course for an individual, and with interaction in a group. They are delivered on a specifically designed Moodle platform. The PACT training kit consists of seven modules with an overall duration of approx. 70 hours:*

*An integral part of the national pilots (April-June 2011) will be a two-day international workshop in Lisbon that will bring physically together representatives of various backgrounds to promote an international exchange.*

Further information on the project can be found at the project website: [www.pact-eu.org](http://www.pact-eu.org)

### **1. Introduction**

In the European Union, violence against women remains an alarming phenomenon. Studies reveal that in Europe at least one in every four women has been beaten or otherwise abused in their lifetimes. Despite the increased attention to the issue and many positive developments in policy and practice, domestic violence is still widespread and has not led yet to a common European educational approach. According to a European study conducted by the Council of Europe (2006-2008), there is up to now no common educational pattern in the field of violence against women in the Europe.

PACT, Promoting Awareness for Cooperation and Training in the Field of Domestic Violence, is a project funded by the European Commission in the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme GRUNDTVIG and carried out from January 2010 to December 2011 by the European partner consortium consisting of seven partner institutions from Germany, Austria, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Poland and Portugal. It intends to fill the identified gap by developing a training kit consisting of face-to-face workshops, e-learning modules as well as an international workshop. The central objective of the PACT training is on the one hand to deepen knowledge about domestic violence among professionals and on the other hand to promote a closer cooperation and networking of all relevant stakeholders at a European level by exchanging knowledge and practice with view to different intervention models.

In the first project phase the partnership conducted comprehensive research activities as well as interviews in order to explore specific needs and wishes in terms of training and networking of local stake-



holders working in the field of domestic violence. All partners were requested to analyse existing education and training with view to content, methodologies, good practice and ICT support. The needs analysis confirmed that there is still a deficiency of further training in the field of domestic violence. The partnership analysed all gathered data and clustered identified training topics in seven training modules. As far as the training method is concerned interviewees clearly expressed their preference for e-learning as they could work flexibly in their free time and would have access also from distant areas. Thus, the seven modules consist of both face-to-face and e-learning units. They are designed for use in training and further training courses for professionals in various fields. The overall duration is approx. 70 hours of which approx. 50 hours are offered in e-learning.

The training kit has been piloted at national level by each partner institution from April 2011 onwards. An integral part of the national pilots is a two-day international workshop carried out in Lisbon in June 2011 that brings physically together representatives of various backgrounds and promotes an international exchange.

The paper at hand introduces the training approach and provides information on the training elements and their interfaces. After an introduction to the blended learning approach, an overview about the modular training programme is given.

## 2. PACT Training Approach

From the gathered data during the needs analysis phase derived that there is a high interest in modular training geared to professional groups at all levels of experience in the field of domestic violence. Thus the training programme provides on the one hand basic knowledge to those target groups that do not deal regularly with victims of domestic violence but are likely to be confronted with cases of domestic violence and on the other hand it delivers specific knowledge to those target groups that have been working in the field but want to refresh or deepen their knowledge and learn more about different approaches.

### 2.1 Training Structure

The structure of the training is based on a modular concept, meaning that the section and units of the course can be used independently. In accordance with this concept, training modules can be composed like 'building blocks' in various ways according to the training needs and characteristics of the target group(s), and the time available for training. The contents are integrated in a methodological modular structure in the form of interchangeable modules and learning units that are used to create individual learning paths.

In addition, local stakeholders who were interviewed by all seven partner organisations in the needs analysis phase expressed the wish to be able to work flexibly with the training programme without spatial and temporal limitations. Against this background a training programme conceived with a blended learning approach seemed the best solution, i.e. a training programme consisting of face-to-face seminars being complemented by online modules. The combination of multiple approaches to learning is called blended learning. This term refers to a learning solution that incorporates several delivery methods and is also used to describe learning that mixes various activities e.g. a mix of live e-learning, face-to-face elements, and self-paced learning. The combination of traditional classroom teaching and e-learning elements is apt to take advantage of both methodologies and, additionally, takes into account different learning styles.

Given the heterogeneity of the target groups regarding their professional and cultural background as well as their level of knowledge and experience, it seems obvious that combined teaching methodologies containing mixed systems of face-to-face learning and e-learning best take into account the possibilities and needs of such a diverse target group.

### 2.2 Training principles

With its modular blended learning approach, the PACT training kit meets two essential needs that were clearly expressed by all interviewees during the needs analysis phase:

**Spatial flexibility:** By combining various e-learning methods with face-to-face training, the learners may access the knowledge from wherever they are until they meet face-to-face with the instructor. This is of particular interest in rural areas with a weak infrastructure.

**Time flexibility:** The PACT blended learning offers self-study modules which can be completed by the learner whenever he/she chooses to do so instead of having to be present at the instructor-led session. In this connection, learners should be encouraged to make use of all different elements; as learners may try to select the parts of the training course that they prefer and therefore not concentrate on other useful elements. Learners should be made aware that the "package" of learning solutions is greater than the parts, and that each element adds something important to the total solution and should not be disregarded.

Training techniques used in the PACT training programme include the following:

- Case Studies – written descriptions of real-life situations used for reflection and discussion (workshops and e-Learning);
- Presentations – activities conducted by the trainer/tutor to convey information, theories, or principles (workshops and e-learning);
- Simulations – enactments of real-life situations (workshops and e-learning);
- Group Discussions – participants share experiences and ideas or problem solutions (workshops and e-learning).
- Brainstorming – a creative and stimulating approach to opening up the consideration of a particular topic. The participants are invited to call out their responses to a given question, and the trainer jots these down on the blackboard or flip chart. Only afterwards will the group start its discussion or analysis, its critical appraisal, structuring and so on. (workshops)
- Self-reflection – with the help of various questionnaires participants are stimulated to examine the impact of personal values, beliefs, styles of communication, and experiences in order to gain a deeper understanding of one's culture, personal and cultural biases, experiences, and beliefs as these may influence future action and learning.
- Quizzes – online questionnaires are provided on the Moodle platform allowing learners to check their knowledge. Learners can take a quiz at any time and view the results after its completion.
- Audiovisual teaching aids – short film clips are used to add an element of authenticity to a topic. These films do not at any point show any act of violence but are interviews with professionals from the field.
- Action maze – is a kind of interactive case-study; the user is presented with a situation, and a number of choices as to a course of action to deal with it. On choosing one of the options, the resulting situation is then presented, again with a set of options. Working through this branching tree is like negotiating a maze, hence the name "Action Maze" (e-learning).

### 2.3 Technical implementation

The PACT training is based on a combination of technology-based materials and face-to-face sessions used together to deliver instruction. The online modules are designed as self-learning course for an individual, and with interaction in a group. They are delivered on a specifically designed *Moodle* platform. The word *Moodle* is actually an acronym for Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment. It has become very popular among educators around the world as a tool for creating and delivering online dynamic web sites for their students. The e-learning modules are specially designed to prepare, repeat or support the trainer-led sessions. Moreover, participants can deepen their knowledge independently at their pace. Ideally, the online learning is accompanied by a trainer or tutor, who is available for feedback and technical support.

Even though the training programme is conceived as blended learning programme, thus foreseeing face-to-face sessions including an introductory workshop in which the e-learning platform and its functions are explained, the e-learning modules can also be worked through independently. An introduction on how to use the e-learning platform is given on the *Moodle* platform itself, where interested users can register directly. In this case it is evident that content related questions or technical problems are left with the learners who can only try to find answers by themselves. Moreover, the direct exchange with the group is limited to virtual communication on the e-learning platform in respective forums or via e-mail. Group exercises that are foreseen in face-to-face workshops in order to experiment certain behaviours, simulate a given situation in the group or the like are not feasible. Pure e-learning despite of its numerous advantages might not achieve the same results as a blended learning programme. Lack of direct exchange amongst learners and resulting motivation problems can be possible reasons for a moderate success.



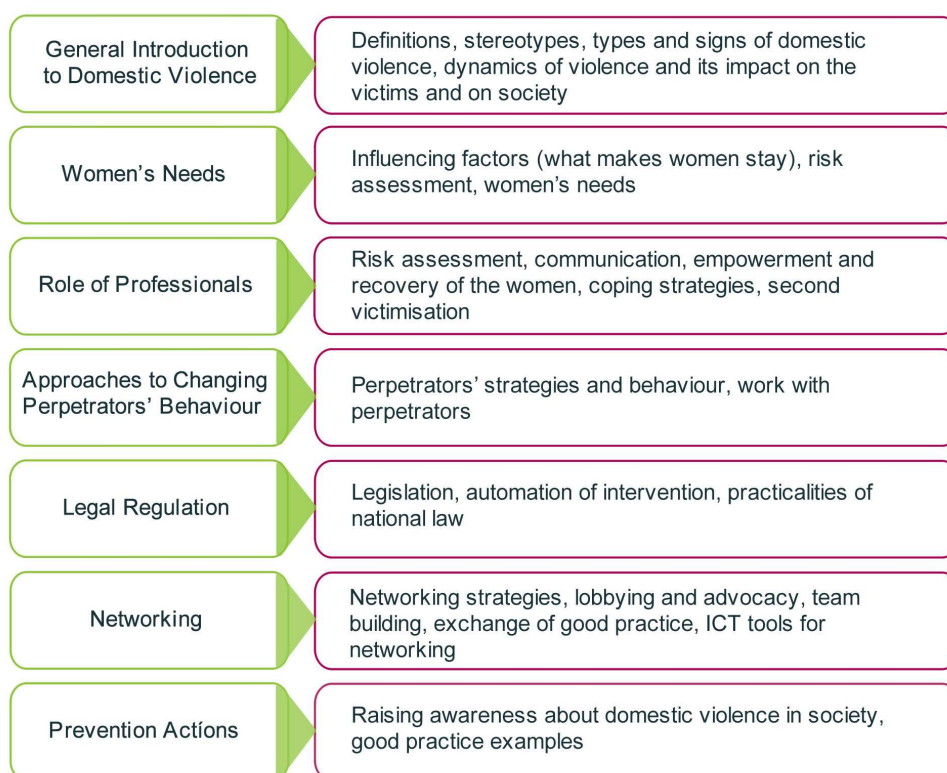


Figure 1: Home page PACT Moodle platform

### 3. Training contents

The training programme is designed for use in training and sensitising relevant professional groups. It includes fundamental information on the issue of domestic violence against women and children which are relevant for all vocational groups as well as more detailed information for professionals who actually deal with domestic violence. Special importance is attached to awareness raising for professionals dealing with victims of domestic violence as an effective means of preventing such violence by giving concrete examples from the field that have proven well in different countries over the last years.

The PACT training kit consists of seven modules:



**Figure 2: Overview of training modules**

The sequence of the modules as illustrated above is not compulsory, i.e. as far as the e-learning is concerned each learner can select where to start and how to go on. Nevertheless, there are three modules which the PACT consortium considered to be interconnected and should thus be worked through in a definite order. These modules are: general context, women's needs role of professionals. Not only are they interconnected but they also offer fundamental information on the issue of domestic violence relevant for all vocational groups. These three modules represent a good introduction for those learners who have not yet worked in the field, whereas the other four modules are more specific and can be used in complete flexible way. According to the modular approach it is above all up to the learners to choose their learning path.

#### 4. Perspective

After the pilot phase the participants in all national courses will give feedback in different formats on the content, approach and methodologies of the course design and training materials. This feedback will be carefully analysed and the project products will be optimised accordingly.

In the final publication each module will be introduced analogically and followed by a detailed description of each of the listed activities. Respective learning objects for each activity will be either delivered in a digital version together with the publication (for face-to-face) or on the e-learning platform.

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