Context, purpose and methodology of the multiprofessional workshops

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Twelve "Working Papers on Intervention" are the first interim results from the empirical program of the project "Cultural Encounters in Intervention Against Violence (CEINAV)", a four-country collaborative research project within the EU HERA Joint Research Programme (www.heranet.info) promoting a European Research Area in the Humanities. CEINAV is studying intervention in three areas of violence (domestic violence, trafficking for sexual exploitation, physical child abuse and neglect) in England and Wales, Germany, Portugal and Slovenia, and exploring questions of ethics, justice, and citizenship, asking how best to ensure the fundamental rights of women and of children to safety from violence. From a three-year research process that listens to the views of practitioners and to the voices of those who have experienced intervention, CEINAV seeks to build a transnational foundation for ethical guidelines for good practice

The project has a very closely integrated approach; five partners are implementing a shared and closely co-ordinated work programme in their four countries. For each stage of the work, an agreed methodology, a common structure and core questions were developed, yielding a basis of comparability. Prior to the workshops, the legal and institutional background as well as the migration and minority history in each country was examined and country context papers written.

The present working papers were completed in October 2014, and comparative analysis is following. They are based on a total of 24 multiprofessional workshops, two per country on each form of violence. The workshops were designed to explore the implicit cultural premises of intervention, both with respect to the institutional regulation of intervention and to the practices of implementing the regulatives and their deployment with minorities or disempowered groups. A further goal was to discover what ethical issues and dilemmas the practitioners experience when having to make difficult decisions, and what grounds they adduce for dealing with such challenges.

The workshops used focal group methodology, aiming to encourage discussion among the different professionals. Participants were practitioners directly involved in casework from a wide range of professional roles, with at least three years of experience in the specific intervention field. The partners worked out a common list of professionals to be invited for each form of violence. It was agreed that participants should not work together on the same cases or sit regularly at the same cooperation tables and no one should be in a group with anyone who supervises or funds them. This was to avoid "in-group" discussions as well as ensuring (as far as possible) that everyone can speak openly about the realities of practice and their experience. To this end, we looked for practitioners from different cities or districts.

The main impulse for discussion was a fictional "case story" aimed to capture how situations of violence enter into the intervention system, as well as the subsequent pathways. The stories were developed in discussion with cooperating practitioners to be realistic in all four countries, then translated and if necessary adapted to fit the institutional framework of the country. In each narrative the first sequence is careful to maintain uncertainty: Is this or is this not a violent situation with a potential need for intervention, how could the various professionals come to the conclusion that there is a violence problem? In the workshops, the story was presented in three sequences; the second and third sequences made the dimension of violence gradually more unequivocal, and included possible points of contact with the intervention system, as well as elements that could provoke debate on practical or ethical dilemmas.

Thus, while the stories differed by form of violence, there was an agreed "narrative arc" across the three sequences in all the stories; and in addition an agreed set of "core questions" that should be

asked in the same way, as nearly verbatim as possible, in all 24 workshops. There were five core questions for the first half of the workshop, and one for the second half. This last asked the professionals to think about what might be different if the victim in the story would belong to a cultural or ethnic minority or a migrant group. The aim was to explore cultural encounters between professionals and those who should be helped by their intervention.

This was the scaffolding upon which a tapestry of diversity could be hung. In the working papers, the responses to these questions are described together with the overall sequence of intervention as it emerged in each country. Supplementary questions and "probes" that could tease out underlying assumptions or stimulate discussion were used to focus the workshops on key ethical issues and challenges to intervention.

The workshops were audiotaped and transcribed, and in the data analysis, each team undertook to extract relevant discursive constructions and representations and to carry out an inductive frame analysis. "Frames" can be understood as a way of describing how simple elements – such as concepts, interpretations, rules, normative assumptions – are linked into cognitively significant "packages" that organize a meaningful "problem" and imply a solution or an idea of appropriate action. There were two approaches to identifying frames empirically. First, influential legal, policy-related and institutional documents were examined to see how these define when and how professionals are expected to take action, and what they can or should do. With this knowledge in hand, the transcripts of the workshops were analysed: Laws and policies may shift their meanings "on the ground"; how practitioners think about violence and intervention may be shaped by frames from their institutional or professional cultures or from their personal life experience. Making frames visible is crucial to our understanding of the group discussions, and to understanding the quite considerable differences in practice across the four countries.

In a further step, practical and ethical dilemmas or points of conflict that were expressed in the course of discussion among professionals were identified and described. These might be practical in nature, as when external conditions or concerns block appropriate professional action, or they may be genuine ethical dilemmas, being faced with mutually exclusive but morally justifiable possible courses of action. Such dilemmas could emerge in our workshops as an inner struggle by actors facing difficult decisions, or as a dispute between actors. Practitioners may see inconsistencies or tensions within the overall intervention system that make effective action difficult. The framing of the issues, the purposes of and the roles within intervention will influence what is or is not experienced as a dilemma.

In short, the task of the working papers was to describe the process structure of intervention (within which some things require decisions and some are given), the way in which the form of violence and the duties, rights and norms of intervention were framed in the workshops, their framing of culture, cultural difference, and minority situations, and the ethical issues and dilemmas that the professionals explicitly or by implication raised. This structure will facilitate the cross-national comparative analysis of intervention for each form of violence.

Read the working papers:

[Working Paper on Intervention Against Child Abuse and Neglect in Germany](#)
[Working Paper on Intervention Against Child Abuse and Neglect in Portugal](#)
[Working Paper on Intervention Against Child Abuse and Neglect in Slovenia](#)
[Working Paper on Intervention Against Child Abuse and Neglect in UK](#)
[Working Paper on Intervention Against Domestic Violence in Germany](#)
[Working Paper on Intervention Against Domestic Violence in Portugal](#)
[Working Paper on Intervention Against Domestic Violence in Slovenia](#)
[Working Paper on Intervention Against Domestic Violence in UK](#)
[Working Paper on Intervention Against Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation in Germany](#)
[Working Paper on Intervention Against Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation in Portugal](#)
[Working Paper on Intervention Against Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation in Slovenia](#)
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