

Building Stronger Ageing Policies To Prevent Elder Abuse

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Abstract

Ageing policy development and elder abuse prevention remains a critical public health and social justice priority, requiring robust policy frameworks and coordinated institutional responses to protect vulnerable older populations. This comparative-reflexive study examines existing legislative frameworks and public policies for protecting older adults from abuse in Slovakia and Norway. While Norway has implemented "SafeEst", a comprehensive model mandating interdisciplinary coordination between healthcare, social services and law enforcement at municipality level, Slovakia's approach primarily operates through the Ministry of Interior in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. The study identifies three key areas requiring development in both countries: 1) Legal framework enhancement ~ Norway lacks specific elder abuse legislation while Slovakia needs stronger implementation of existing protections. 2) Service delivery standardisation ~ Norway requires consistent SafeEst implementation across municipalities while Slovakia needs development of local-level coordination mechanisms. 3) Prevention strategy development ~ both countries need expanded digital abuse prevention, enhanced professional training, and improved rural service accessibility. These findings suggest that combining Norway's preventive, community-based approach with Slovakia's strong legal protection could create a more comprehensive elder abuse prevention framework, applicable across different national contexts.

Keywords: comparative analysis, elder abuse, elder protection, institutional coordination, legislation, policy framework, SafeEst model

INTRODUCTION

Elder abuse is a pressing public health challenge that has garnered increasing attention as life expectancy across Europe increases. Defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as "a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person" [1], elder abuse remains a pervasive issue with significant social and health implications. Globally, one in six older adults experiences some form of abuse, and these rates are likely to have risen during the COVID-19 pandemic due to increased social isolation, economic crises and stress [2]. This alarming prevalence underscores the urgent need for robust ageing and public policy frameworks and coordinated institutional responses to protect vulnerable older populations, in accordance with the ecological model in a transversal way, from the individual to structural [3].

Norway and Slovakia exemplify two distinct approaches to elder abuse prevention in Europe, offering valuable insights into how different institutional frameworks address this complex issue. Norway has implemented a comprehensive prevention model known as SafeEst (Tryggest in Norwegian), which stands for the "Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults". This model includes a risk assessment tool designed to evaluate the potential for violence among individuals. The SafeEst model emphasises coordinated responses at the municipality level, involving collaboration among healthcare providers, social services,

and law enforcement agencies [4].

Slovakia's approach, in contrast, is more centralised and operates primarily through the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, with a stronger focus on criminal justice responses [5]. The prevalence of elder abuse among community-dwelling older adults in Norway ranges, according to empirical studies, from 6.8% to 9.2%; however, experts postulate that actual rates may be substantially higher due to underreporting [4]. Within the current Norwegian legislative framework, elder abuse is not addressed through dedicated statutory provisions, as older adults are subsumed under general adult protection laws. The demographic projections, indicating unprecedented growth in the ageing population, coupled with inevitable increase in demand for geriatric care services and age-adaptive policy frameworks make it imperative to develop and implement evidence-based interventions for the prevention and mitigation of elder abuse [6]. This issue represents a significant public health concern requiring immediate policy attention and systematic programmatic responses. In Slovakia, a survey performed in 2020 found that 69% of elderly respondents reported experiencing psychological violence and 47% reported economic abuse Slovak National Center for Human Rights, 2023 [7]. These statistics highlight the critical need to examine how different institutional frameworks and policy approaches impact the prevention and mitigation of elder abuse. This study seeks to address the following research question: **How do institutional approaches and ageing policy frameworks for elder abuse prevention differ between Norway and Slovakia, and what implications do these differences have for protecting vulnerable older populations?** By conducting a comparative analysis, this research aims to contribute to the development of effective elder abuse prevention strategies, particularly by examining how institutional arrangements influence service delivery and protection outcomes in an ecological perspective.

The findings of this study are particularly relevant for policymakers and practitioners in Europe, where ageing populations and evolving social structures demand tailored approaches to elder abuse prevention. Exploring the strengths and limitations of the frameworks operating in Norway and Slovakia enables this research to offer actionable insights for enhancing protection systems and promoting social justice in ageing societies.

Theoretical Framework

Understanding how different nations approach elder abuse prevention requires a multi-faceted theoretical lens that captures both policy development processes and institutional responses. This study employs three complementary theoretical frameworks to analyse how Norway and Slovakia have developed their distinct approaches to elder abuse prevention and protection. The Toronto Declaration on the Global Prevention of Elder Abuse [8] serves as the foundational framework for this analysis. This declaration, developed through a collaborative process with the World Health Organisation, provides a comprehensive definition of elder abuse and establishes key principles for prevention and intervention. The declaration emphasises that elder abuse represents a violation of human rights and highlights the need for multi-sectoral responses that address both individual and systemic factors contributing to abuse. Its principles particularly inform the analysis of how Norway and Slovakia conceptualise and respond to elder abuse within their respective policy frameworks. The analysis was also guided by Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework. This framework was useful in elucidating how elder abuse policies evolved in both countries; it also shed light on the recognition of the challenges of the existing ageing policies, and the subsequent development of elder abuse prevention strategies, in Norway and Slovakia. Finally, WHO's public health framework provided a structured approach for examining prevention and intervention strategies, while its legal protection frameworks were used to analyse the differences in how each country conceptualised elder protection. The particular strength of the WHO framework lies in its ability to explain why similar social

issues may lead to different policy outcomes across national contexts [1].

By using the Multiple Streams Framework, the differences in elder abuse prevention policy between the Norwegian and Slovak approaches could be analysed. While Norway has developed its SafeEst model emphasising systematic prevention through municipal-level coordination, Slovakia has structured its response primarily through its Ministry of Interior, focusing on criminal justice interventions [9]. These divergent approaches reflect different problem definitions, ageing policy development of solutions, and political contexts in each country. Complementing this policy analysis, WHO's public health framework [1] provides a structured approach for examining prevention and intervention strategies. This framework is particularly relevant as it emphasises the importance of primary prevention, while acknowledging the need for responsive interventions. The approach in Norway aligns closely with this public health perspective, mandating interdisciplinary coordination between healthcare, social services, and law enforcement, but it lacks general guidelines and laws that would extend this public policy to the whole country. In contrast, the system in Slovakia ~ while acknowledging prevention ~ places greater emphasis on response mechanisms (tertiary prevention) through its Information Offices for Victims of Crimes.

The third theoretical pillar examines legal protection frameworks, which reveal fundamental differences in how each country conceptualises elder protection. Slovakia's Criminal Code (Act Nr. 300/2005) explicitly designates persons over 60 as 'protected persons', granting them specific legal status and protections. Protected persons are individuals who hold a specific status within the realm of criminal law, necessitating enhanced protection of their rights; consequently, legislation mandates more stringent penalties for offenders who commit crimes against these protected individuals (Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, 2020) Norway's approach, however, focuses on vulnerability rather than age, integrating elder protection within broader adult safeguarding legislation. In addition, Norway's Penal Code (LOV-2019-06-21-52) does not have any specification about the elderly as a protected population, in contrast with WHO guidelines developed from the Toronto Declaration and Global status report on violence prevention [8]. This distinction reflects deeper differences in how each society conceptualises and responds to elder vulnerability [9].

These theoretical frameworks jointly illuminate why Norway and Slovakia developed contrasting approaches to elder abuse prevention that, although different, have the potential to be complementary in an ecological model [9]. They contextualise both the current state of elder protection and the historical policy trajectories in each country. This theoretical foundation enables evaluation of policy effectiveness and identifies potential areas for reform.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative research design to explore and compare the institutional frameworks and policy measures for elder abuse prevention in Norway and Slovakia. The research employs thematic-content analysis as the primary methodological approach, following the guidelines outlined by Green and Thorogood [10] for health policy analysis. This method allows for a systematic examination of the institutional arrangements, policy frameworks and implementation strategies in both countries, providing a comprehensive understanding of how each nation addresses the issue of elder abuse.

Data Collection

The data for this study was represented by an elaborate theoretical corpus composed of documents collected from a variety of e-sources, including official government documents, public health reports, legislative texts and national laws including rules, and academic literature. In Norway, key documents

such as the SafeEst model guidelines, municipal-level adult protection system reports, the interdisciplinary coordination protocols, and the Penal Code (LOV-2019-06-21-52) were analysed [12]. The focus in Slovakia was on documents from the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, including criminal justice responses, victim support services, and elder protection laws. Additionally, international reports from bodies such as WHO and the European Union were reviewed to provide a broader context for the analysis.

Documents that satisfied the inclusion criteria had to be relevant to Norway or Slovakia, publicly available, and directly related to elder abuse prevention, protection of the public, or ageing policies in these countries. Documents that were summaries, abstracts, or not available in full text were excluded from the analysis. The timeframe of 2014-2024 was selected to capture recent policy developments and institutional responses to elder abuse in both countries. This period reflects significant advancements in elder abuse prevention frameworks; this is particularly the case in Norway, where the SafeEst model was further developed and implemented during these years. In Slovakia, the introduction of key legislative measures such as the Criminal Code (Act Nr. 300/2005), and the establishment of victim support services under the Ministry of Interior, happened within this timeframe [9].

By focusing on this decade, the study ensures that the analysis is based on the most current and relevant policies, providing a timely and accurate comparison of the two countries' approaches.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process followed a structured thematic-content analysis approach, as described by Bowen [13].

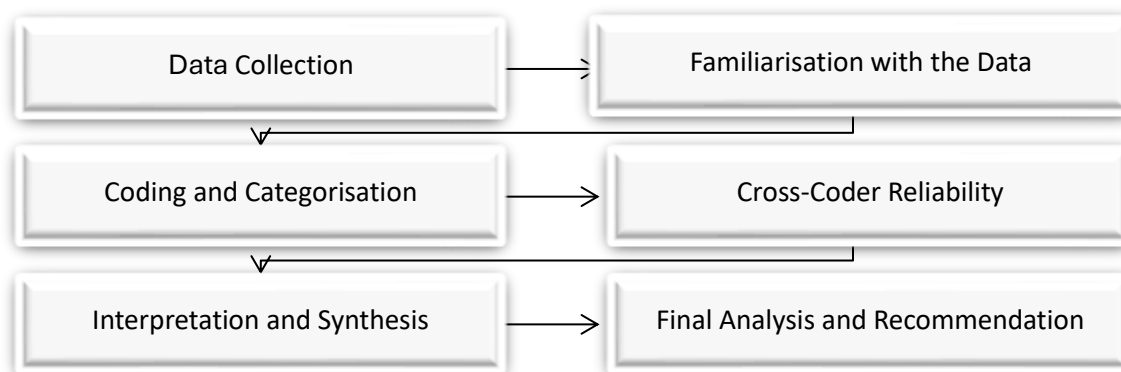


Figure 1. Data Analysis Process

Source: authors' elaboration based on Bowen [13]

This involved several key steps:

1. Familiarisation with the Data

All documents were thoroughly read to gain an understanding of the content and context. This step included identifying key themes, such as institutional coordination, legal frameworks, prevention strategies, and service accessibility.

2. Coding and Categorisation

The data was coded inductively, with categories emerging from the content of the documents; for example, codes related to interdisciplinary collaboration in Norway and criminal justice responses in Slovakia were developed. These codes were then grouped into broader themes, such as policy frameworks, institutional roles, and implementation challenges.

3. Cross-Coder Reliability

To ensure the reliability of the coding process, three researchers independently coded a sample of the

documents. Discrepancies were discussed and resolved through consensus, and the final coding framework was applied to all documents. This step helped to enhance the internal validity of the analysis.

4. Interpretation and Synthesis

The coded data was interpreted in light of the research question, focusing on the differences and similarities between Norway and Slovakia in terms of their approaches to elder abuse prevention. The findings were synthesised to identify key areas for policy development in Slovakia, based on the strengths of the Norwegian model.

Ethical Consideration

Since the study relied on publicly available documents and data, ethical approval was not required. However, all sources were properly cited, and the analysis was conducted with a focus on accuracy and transparency.

Limitations

The limitations of this study stem from its reliance solely on documentary analysis, which may not capture the full complexity of policy implementation or the lived experiences of older adults. The study cannot fully assess the gap between written policies and their practical implementation. Real-world challenges, resource constraints, and local variations in policy execution may not be apparent from documentary sources alone. The qualitative nature of the study means that it cannot provide statistical comparisons of programme effectiveness or systematic measurement of outcomes between the two countries. While the study examines national frameworks, it may not adequately capture regional variations in policy implementation within each country, particularly when comparing rural and urban areas. Future research could complement this approach with qualitative interviews or case studies to provide a more nuanced understanding of elder abuse prevention in both countries.

By employing this methodological approach, the study aims to contribute to the development of more effective elder abuse prevention strategies, particularly in Slovakia, by drawing on the strengths of the comprehensive and coordinated Norwegian model.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The comparative analysis revealed significant differences in how Norway and Slovakia approach elder abuse prevention through their institutional frameworks and policy implementation. The distinct philosophical and practical approaches to protecting their vulnerable older populations were also highlighted.

Table 1. Summarizing Key Differences Between Norway and Slovakia

Aspect	Norway	Slovakia
Institutional Coordination	Mandatory cooperation between healthcare, social services, and law enforcement	Limited coordination, primarily through the Ministry of Interior
Service Delivery	Integrated, municipality-based systems	Centralised reporting, limited integration between health and social services
Prevention Strategies	Proactive risk assessment, early intervention, public awareness campaigns	Reactive criminal justice responses, basic awareness campaigns
Accessibility	High accessibility, especially in rural areas	Geographic disparities, limited access in rural areas

Source: authors' elaboration based on analysis

A. Norway's Comprehensive, Municipality-Based Approach

The SafeEst model in Norway exemplifies a comprehensive, municipality-based approach to elder protection, characterised by integrated cooperation between healthcare providers, social services and law enforcement agencies [14]. Operating through dedicated adult protection teams in each municipality, the framework ensures consistent implementation of national policies through standardised protocols for information sharing and intervention.

The contrast between Norwegian and Slovak approaches to elder abuse prevention reveals distinct institutional philosophies; while Norway's SafeEst framework emphasises preventive measures and interdisciplinary collaboration at the local level, Slovakia maintains a centralised system primarily oriented toward criminal justice responses. This fundamental difference reflects broader variations in how these nations conceptualise and address elder protection within their respective social welfare systems.

Key features of the Norwegian approach include

- Systematic Risk Assessment and Early Intervention

The model emphasises proactive measures, such as regular risk assessments and early intervention strategies, to prevent elder abuse before it escalates.

- Integrated Service Delivery

Elder abuse prevention is seamlessly integrated into broader healthcare and social services, ensuring that older adults have access to comprehensive support.

- Professional Training

This multi-faceted approach reflects Norway's commitment to comprehensive elder protection, though implementation varies across municipalities due to local resource availability and population needs [6]. The success of the model largely depends on strong inter-agency collaboration and continuous evaluation of service effectiveness, with regular adjustments made based on outcome assessments and emerging challenges in elder abuse prevention.

B. Slovakia's Centralised, Criminal Justice-Oriented Approach

In contrast, Slovakia's framework operates through a more centralised structure, primarily managed by the Ministry of Interior in conjunction with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. While Slovakia's Criminal Code (Act Nr. 300/2005) explicitly designates persons over 60 as a protected class, this legal protection has not translated into the same level of systematic interdisciplinary coordination seen in Norway. The Slovak approach emphasises criminal justice responses over preventive interventions, with less formalised institutional coordination at the local level [15].

Key characteristics of Slovakia's approach include:

- Criminal Justice Focus

The framework prioritises legal and criminal justice responses to elder abuse, with a strong emphasis on prosecution and deterrence.

- Centralised Reporting Mechanisms

Service delivery relies heavily on centralised reporting through the Ministry of Interior, which can lead to delays and inefficiencies in addressing elder abuse cases.

- Geographic Disparities

The centralised nature of the system has resulted in notable geographic disparities in service accessibility, with rural areas being affected by limited resources.

- Limited Preventive Measures

These characteristics reflect Slovakia's traditional approach to elder protection, which, while providing strong legal frameworks, may benefit from modernisation and decentralisation [5]. Recent assessments

indicate a growing recognition of the need to shift towards more preventive and community-based approaches, though institutional and budgetary constraints continue to pose significant challenges to system reform [16]. The current system's emphasis on criminal justice responses, while important, may inadvertently overlook opportunities for early intervention and prevention that could reduce the overall incidence of elder abuse.

Service Delivery Models: Accessibility and Integration

The service delivery models in these countries reflect their differing institutional approaches. The system in Norway prioritises accessibility and the integration of services through mandatory municipal-level adult protection systems. This integration extends to clear reporting mechanisms, response protocols, and regular case reviews to assess service quality [4]. The Norwegian model emphasises proactive case finding and early intervention, with designated coordinators in each municipality responsible for facilitating cross-sector collaboration and ensuring consistent service delivery standards. Additionally, the system incorporates regular feedback mechanisms from service users and providers to continuously improve response effectiveness. By contrast, the service delivery structure in Slovakia relies more heavily on centralised reporting through the Ministry of Interior, with limited integration between health and social services [16]. This centralisation has led to notable geographic disparities in service accessibility, particularly affecting rural areas.

Prevention Strategies: Proactive vs. Reactive Approaches

Comparison on prevention strategies between the two countries also show marked differences in their philosophical paradigms. Norway's SafeEst model emphasises systematic risk assessment and early intervention, supported by regular training for healthcare and social service professionals. The Norwegian approach includes comprehensive public awareness campaigns targeting both older adults and caregivers, along with the development of support networks within local communities. Slovakia's prevention strategy, however, focuses more narrowly on criminal justice deterrence and basic awareness campaigns through the Ministry of Interior, with limited professional training programmes and a more reactive approach to intervention.

C. Identified Gaps in Slovakia's Framework

The analysis identified several significant gaps in Slovakia's current framework, including:

- **Limited Institutional Coordination Mechanisms**

The lack of formalised coordination between healthcare, social services, and law enforcement hampers the effectiveness of elder abuse prevention efforts.

- **Insufficient Integration of Health and Social Services**

The separation of health and social services creates barriers to accessing comprehensive support for older adults.

- **Geographic Disparities in Service Accessibility**

Rural areas, in particular, face challenges in accessing elder abuse prevention services due to the centralised nature of the system.

- **Lack of Systematic Professional Training Programmes**

The absence of regular training for professionals limits their ability to identify and respond to elder abuse effectively.

- **Limited Emphasis on Preventive Interventions**

Slovakia's framework places greater emphasis on reactive measures, such as criminal justice responses, rather than proactive prevention strategies.

The establishment of formal coordination mechanisms could significantly improve service delivery,

without requiring radical systemic changes. The gradual development of local-level protection teams would bridge the gap between centralised policy and local implementation, ensuring that services are accessible and responsive to community needs. These identified gaps highlight the need for a more integrated and proactive approach to elder abuse prevention in Slovakia, particularly in light of its rapidly ageing population [17]. While the current legal framework provides a solid foundation for elder protection, addressing these systemic gaps through targeted reforms and increased resource allocation would significantly enhance the effectiveness of prevention efforts and better serve vulnerable older adults across all regions of the country.

D. Identified Gaps in Norway's Framework

Despite Norway's comprehensive municipality-based approach through the SafeEst model [18], several significant limitations exist in their elder abuse prevention framework:

- The absence of specific legislation addressing elder abuse, with primary reliance on the general penal code, potentially limiting intervention effectiveness.
- There is a significant underreporting of abuse cases, with authorities acknowledging that current statistics likely underestimate the true prevalence of elder abuse due to the lack of national guidelines and voluntary, rather than mandatory, accession to the SafeEst programme.
- The Norwegian Penal Code (LOV-2019-06-21-52) lacks explicit recognition of elderly people as a protected population, contrary to WHO guidelines and international declarations.
- There are insufficient general guidelines for implementing the SafeEst model across municipalities, potentially leading to the inconsistent application of prevention measures.
- There is limited standardisation of public policy implementation nationwide, despite mandatory interdisciplinary coordination requirements.

Norway allocates substantial resources to its elder abuse prevention programmes, ensuring that municipalities have the necessary funding to implement the SafeEst model. This includes investments in professional training, public awareness campaigns, and integrated service delivery. Slovakia faces challenges in securing adequate funding for elder abuse prevention, and the centralised nature of its system often leads to resource allocation inefficiencies, particularly in rural areas.

The Role of Civil Society and Community-Based Initiatives

While institutional frameworks are crucial, civil society organisations (CSOs) and community-based initiatives play a significant role in elder abuse prevention. These organisations often fill gaps in service delivery and provide essential support to older adults [19].

• Norway's Community Networks

In Norway, local community networks, academia, and NGOs work closely with municipal authorities to identify and address elder abuse, often provide counselling services, legal aid, and temporary shelters. The collaboration between the government and civil society enhances the overall effectiveness of elder protection systems [4].

• Slovakia's Limited Civil Society Engagement

In Slovakia, the role of civil society in elder abuse prevention is less pronounced [20]. While some NGOs offer support services, their reach is limited, particularly in rural areas. Strengthening partnerships between the government and civil society could help bridge the gap in service delivery and provide more comprehensive support to older adults.

Emerging Trends in Elder Abuse Prevention

As populations continue to age globally, new trends and challenges are emerging in the field of elder abuse prevention. These trends are particularly relevant for countries like Norway and Slovakia, which are

adapting their policies to address the evolving needs of older adults.

- Digitalisation and Elder Abuse

With the increasing reliance on digital technologies, older adults are becoming more vulnerable to cyber abuse and financial scams. Norway has begun integrating digital literacy programmes into its elder abuse prevention strategies, helping older adults navigate online platforms safely [21]. Slovakia, however, has yet to fully address cyber abuse and financial scams, leaving older populations at risk of digital exploitation [16]. Future policies in Slovakia could benefit from incorporating digital literacy training into public awareness campaigns.

- COVID-19 and Social Isolation

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated social isolation among older adults, leading to increased risks of abuse. Norway adapted quickly to the crisis by expanding e-health services and community outreach programmes to maintain contact with vulnerable older adults [22]. Slovakia, with its more centralised system, faced challenges in reaching isolated populations, particularly in rural areas. This highlights the need for more flexible and adaptive service delivery models in Slovakia.

- Intersectionality in Elder Abuse

Elder abuse often intersects with other forms of vulnerability, such as gender, socioeconomic status, and disability. Norway has made strides in addressing these intersections by tailoring support services to meet the specific needs of marginalised groups, such as older women and immigrants [23]. Slovakia could benefit from adopting a more intersectional approach in its elder abuse prevention framework, ensuring that policies are inclusive and equitable [16].

E. Key Recommendations for Slovakia

Based on the analysis, the following recommendations could strengthen the elder abuse prevention framework in Slovakia:

- Improve Institutional Coordination

Establish formal coordination mechanisms between healthcare providers, social services and law enforcement to enhance interdisciplinary collaboration.

- Enhance Service Accessibility

Develop integrated service points, particularly in rural areas, to ensure that older adults have equitable access to support services.

- Invest in Preventive Measures

Shift the focus from reactive criminal justice responses to proactive prevention strategies, including public awareness campaigns and professional training programmes.

- Develop Local-Level Protection Teams

Create dedicated adult protection teams at the local level to bridge the gap between centralised policy and local implementation. Address Geographic Disparities

Allocate resources to rural areas to reduce service accessibility gaps and ensure that all older adults, regardless of location, can access support.

Implementation of these recommendations would require sustained commitment from policymakers and stakeholders across multiple sectors, along with adequate resource allocation and clear implementation timelines [5]. While these changes represent significant institutional reforms, the potential benefits in terms of improved elder protection and reduced abuse rates would justify the investment, particularly given the demographic trends in Slovakia towards an increasingly ageing population.

Policy Recommendations for Slovakia

Based on the findings of this study, Slovakia could strengthen its elder abuse prevention framework by

adopting the following recommendations:

- Establishing a Public Health Approach

Slovakia could benefit from establishing a public health approach to elder abuse prevention, similar to Norway's SafeEst model. This would involve shifting the focus from reactive criminal justice responses to proactive prevention strategies, including risk assessments, early intervention, and community-based support programmes.

- Enhance Data Collection and Monitoring

Improved data collection and monitoring systems are essential for identifying trends in elder abuse and evaluating the effectiveness of prevention programmes. Slovakia could establish a national database to track elder abuse cases, monitor service delivery, and inform policy development.

- Promote Intergenerational Solidarity

Encouraging intergenerational solidarity through community programmes and public awareness campaigns can help reduce social isolation and foster a culture of respect and care for older adults. Slovakia could develop initiatives that bring together younger and older generations, promoting mutual understanding and support.

- Leverage EU Funding and Support

As a member of the European Union, Slovakia has access to various funding programmes aimed at improving social services and protecting vulnerable populations. Leveraging EU funding could provide the necessary resources to enhance elder abuse prevention efforts, particularly in underserved rural areas.

Policy Recommendations for Norway

Based on this findings of this study, the following policy recommendations are proposed to enhance the elder abuse prevention framework in Norway:

- Legislative Framework Enhancement

A comprehensive strengthening of Norway's legal foundation is needed through specific elder abuse legislation and explicit recognition of older adults as a protected population in the Penal Code (LOV-2019-06-21-52), aligning with international standards and WHO guidelines [12].

- Strengthen Reporting Mechanisms

Implementation of standardised reporting protocols across municipalities, with clear channels for both professionals and the public, would address current underreporting issues and enable better tracking of elder abuse cases.

- Standardise SafeEst Implementation

The development of comprehensive national guidelines and standard operating procedures for the SafeEst model would ensure consistent quality of service delivery and interdisciplinary coordination across all municipalities.

- Enhanced Professional Training

Expanding the content of standardised training programmes, to ensure all stakeholders have a comprehensive understanding of elder abuse identification, prevention, and emerging challenges such as digital abuse, would build a more competent workforce involved in elder protection [24].

- Monitoring and Evaluation System

The creation of a national database and systematic evaluation framework would enable evidence-based improvement of prevention efforts through regular assessment of programme effectiveness and outcome tracking.

These findings suggest that while both countries acknowledge elder abuse as a significant social issue, their institutional responses differ substantially in scope, coordination, and implementation approach.

Norway's comprehensive framework appears better positioned to address the complex nature of elder abuse through its integrated, municipality-based approach; Slovakia's system shows potential for enhancement through improved institutional coordination and a stronger emphasis on prevention, particularly in areas of service integration and accessibility.

Comparative Analysis of Funding and Resource Allocation

The effectiveness of elder abuse prevention frameworks is closely tied to the availability of funding and resources. A comparative analysis of funding mechanisms in Norway and Slovakia reveals significant disparities.

- The Robust Funding Model in Norway

Norway allocates substantial resources to its elder abuse prevention programmes, ensuring that municipalities have the necessary funding to implement the SafeEst model. This includes investments in professional training, public awareness campaigns, and integrated service delivery. The strong economy in Norway and its commitment to social welfare enable it to prioritise elder protection [25].

- Resource Constraints in Slovakia

Slovakia faces challenges in securing adequate funding for elder abuse prevention. The centralised nature of its system often leads to resource allocation inefficiencies, particularly in rural areas. Increased investment in elder protection, coupled with more equitable distribution of resources, could significantly enhance Slovakia's ability to address elder abuse.

CONCLUSION

This comparative analysis of elder abuse prevention frameworks in Norway and Slovakia reveals significant opportunities for mutual learning and system enhancement. The findings demonstrate that while Norway's preventive, community-based approach through SafeEst enables early intervention and a coordinated response, it lacks the strong legal protections found in the Slovak system. Conversely, Slovakia's robust legal framework for elder protection, while providing clear judicial authority, requires stronger local-level implementation and prevention strategies. Three critical areas emerge as priorities for both countries: enhancing legal frameworks, standardising service delivery, and developing comprehensive prevention strategies, particularly in regard to digital abuse and rural accessibility. The optimal approach combines Norway's integrated service delivery model with Slovakia's strong legal protections, creating a comprehensive framework that could serve as a model for other European countries. This balanced approach would ensure both systematic prevention and robust legal protection, while addressing emerging challenges such as digital exploitation and social isolation. Future research should focus on developing standardised implementation protocols and evaluating the effectiveness of combined legal-preventive approaches in different national contexts.

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