



**What are Age-Friendly Environments?**

**Why should European Cities and Regions become more Age-Friendly?**

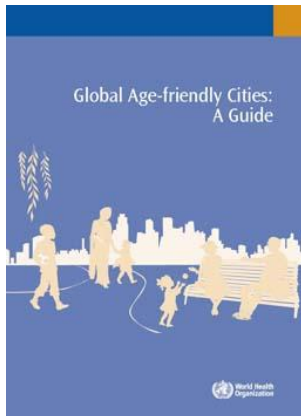
Europe is ageing. People aged 50+ represent already 37% of the population, i.e. 190 million citizens. The number of people 60+ will increase by about two million persons each year in the coming decades, while the working age population will start to shrink. The number of very old persons, 80 years and older, who are most likely in need of care, will also increase. At the same time fewer young people will be available to provide informal and formal support and care.

Therefore, today's opportunity is to find sustainable solutions to address the challenges linked to population ageing. Prevention, rehabilitation, improvement of care delivery, empowerment of people to remain active and independent for longer are the main areas to be invested in to support everyone's equal and meaningful participation in the social and economic life of their community. This can be done through the creation of what we call age-friendly environments, i.e. the adaptation of our physical and social environments to the various needs of all generations.

Promoting age-friendly environments is AFE-INNOVNET goal. AFE-INNOVNET is an EU-funded Thematic Network gathering local and regional authorities as well as other stakeholders committed to work to make the EU more age-friendly.



## What are Age-Friendly Environments?



According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the physical and social environments are key determinants of whether people can remain healthy, independent and autonomous long into their old age.

A city, or any local or regional authority, is age-friendly when it enables people of all ages to actively participate in community activities, treats everyone with respect, regardless of their age, and protects the most vulnerable ones. It is a place that helps people stay healthy and active even at the oldest ages.

Become age-friendly means starting by listening to people to understand what they want and need as they age.

The WHO has published in 2007 a guide which defines the relevant areas to work on to become age-friendly. It looks at 8 domains of citizens' live which have an impact on how people age. These domains are: housing, transportation, urban spaces and built environment, social participation, civic participation and employment, respect and social inclusion, access to community support and health services, and communication and information. These domains are the petals of WHO flower:



By gathering older persons' needs and views, local and regional authorities will be able to identify end-users' needs in each of these 8 domains. Older persons themselves are indeed the best placed to say how the city can become a better place for its ageing population. It is also important to consult all age groups to ensure that local and regional authorities take into account needs of all generations.

## Why should European Local and Regional Authorities become more Age-Friendly?

Within many Member States, regional and local governments are the ones competent for policy areas related to social services, healthcare, education and training, entrepreneurship, labour market, infrastructure and transport, etc. Their action is thus crucial to allow seniors to participate in the community's life, prevent isolation and make goods and services more accessible to their citizens.



Investing in age-friendly environments helps focus on prevention and empower people to live independently for longer, which lowers the pressure put on family carers, formal care facilities and thus on public budgets. It also supports people to actively contribute to the socio and economic life of their community, notably through consumption of goods and services, employment and volunteering. In a 2011 study, it was shown that, in the UK, people 65+ made a net contribution of €47 million to the UK economy through, amongst other contributions, taxes, spending power, provision of social care and the value of their volunteering. With population ageing, they estimated that this contribution will actually grow up to €90 million by 2030.

Beyond economic benefits, age-friendly environments are also a mean to ensure that the rights of older persons are protected, regardless of their age and abilities. It indeed guarantees them to benefit from equal opportunities to participate in the society and to age in dignity. Moreover, age-friendly environments benefit not only older persons but all generations, for example better accessibility of outdoor spaces and transport is useful for families with pushchairs or travellers with heavy luggage.

Last but not least, creating age-friendly environments is also a great way to bring different partners together (policy-makers, employers, services providers, social actors, citizens, etc.) and make cities and regions more inclusive and dynamic through the participation of all citizens regardless of their age, as local and regional authorities have a key role to play in influencing and encouraging these partnerships.

## Why this brochure?

This brochure aims at providing examples of what local and regional authorities are already doing to become more age-friendly. It will show the large variety of initiatives possible for each domain identified by WHO and by doing so, demonstrate that small-scale initiatives, change of mind-set or partnerships can do a lot to address Europe's demographic change.

We hope you will enjoy the reading!





# Housing

## Why is housing important?

Good quality, affordable, well-designed housing is a key element to older persons' health and quality of life and whether they are able to age independently and actively in their community.

Its adequacy and its proximity to community and social services allow older residents to live comfortably and safely, while housing affordability gives them peace of mind, a feeling of stability, and contribute to their social inclusion.

Housing also carries a vital meaning to people's social identity, status and place in the society.

## Some concrete examples

In Brussels (Belgium), the organisation "Infor-Homes Bruxelles" helps older persons find information and gives them advices on the different housing solutions available. They also work on quality care and fight against elder abuse.

In Alicante (Spain) the Municipal Housing Board initiated in 2003 the "Municipal Project for Intergenerational Housing and Community Services", which works to address the specific housing needs of low-income older persons and young people through the provision of 244 affordable, intergenerational housing units in central urban areas, creating a supportive, family-like environments and sense of belonging among residents.

In Nantes (France), a new housing programme has been launched. It proposes flats which can be adapted to different needs throughout the life of the residents:

- Partitions can be added to have more/less rooms
- Sheathes are pre-installed to facilitate the provision of tele-assistance services if a need arises
- Shared spaces for intergenerational exchanges are available in the building
- Shops are available on the ground level





# Social participation

## Why is social participation important?

Social dynamics and relationships greatly contribute to quality of life, both in terms of practical and emotional support. Participating in leisure, social, cultural and spiritual activities fosters seniors' integration within society and helps them stay engaged, informed and motivated to take part in activities in which they are valued and needed.

Seniors' participation in social activities helps preventing social isolation, and intergenerational activities are mutually enriching and fulfilling for all ages: older people passing on knowledge, traditions and experience and the younger ones may help seniors with for example new technologies.

## Some concrete examples

« Generation Games » is an intergenerational event taking place in Rotterdam (The Netherlands) making connections between people of all ages through sport.

Following a study showing that the delivery of meals contributes to older persons' isolation, and does not necessarily encourage them to eat enough, the City of Geneva (Switzerland) has developed the project "Around a table". Once a week, a group of seniors accompanied by a volunteer, go to a restaurant for lunch for the same cost. A volunteer is picking up persons with reduced mobility at their homes.

De Betties is an intergenerational choir at the Residential Care Centre Huis Perrekes in Geel (Belgium). The choir has approx. 70 members and consists of young and older people, people with dementia and their carers. Families of residents, staff members are also closely involved with the choir.



Warsaw (Poland) is creating a new activity centre for older persons. The goals of the centre are to improve the health and welfare of senior citizens, promote volunteer work, bridge generations, initiate social dialogue, improve the public perception of ageing, and prepare middle-aged people for a physically and socially active life in their older years.



# Respect and Social inclusion

## Why are respect and social inclusion important?

Negative preconceptions of ageing still exist. Public attitudes, behaviours and representations of older age may marginalise and exclude older people, and by doing so contribute to older people's isolation. It prevents older persons from feeling valuable and the society from benefiting from the participation and the experience and knowledge of older persons.

Moreover, we often witness a lack of involvement of older persons on decisions that concern them. If we want to develop relevant and adequate products and services for older persons, they have to be consulted throughout the thinking, the designing and the development processes.

## Some concrete examples

In Frederiksberg (Denmark), a nursing home has been opened on the ground floor of a housing building. Shared spaces allow interactions between residents of the nursing home and residents of the flats, and create intergenerational exchanges. Residents of the nursing home are then included in the daily life of the other residents and benefit from the so-called positive noise.

Local shops in Bruges (Belgium) have been trained to recognise signs of dementia and treat customers with dementia with respect and understanding. By raising awareness and educating citizens, the quality of life of people with dementia is improved and they feel comfortable keeping on with their daily habits.

Cymru Older People's Alliance is a network of older people's groups across the whole of Wales (UK) that was set up to ensure the voice of older people influence all the policy and practice that affect them. With direct representation at all levels of Government it ensures that older people are active and valued partners across the national agenda shaping the opportunities for people in Wales to age well in the future





# Civic participation and employment

## Why are civic participation and employment important?

The domain of civic participation and employment recognises older persons' contribution to the socio and economic life of their community, e.g. through employment, volunteering or citizenship. Older people can gain fulfilment from active involvement in voluntary activities or work, as it provides satisfaction, increases their health and well-being and keeps them socially engaged while making the society benefit from their knowledge and experience, strengthening the intergenerational relationships in the population and offering lifelong learning opportunities.

There have been reports of age discrimination in the workplace. Building up employers' positive attitude towards retaining and recruiting older workers would help ensure equal employment opportunities for seniors and knowledge transfer opportunities benefiting younger workers.

## Some concrete examples

"Senior Enterprise" is an Irish EU supported initiative aimed at fostering seniors' involvement with enterprise. It helps people aged 50+ to start, acquire or invest in a business or be active as advisors in new and developing businesses.

Reutlingen (Germany) has adopted for the city administration a family-friendly culture. It helps its employees reconcile work and family life, re-enter work activities after a caregiver leave and continue working while providing care to relatives. It helps the City win qualified staff, increase motivation and reduce staff fluctuations.

"The Centre of Lifelong Learning" in Prague (Czech Republic) represents a new model of an intergenerational, non-vocational education for all ages. It offers top quality lectures at an affordable rate in order to make education accessible for disadvantaged groups such as disabled, retired and unemployed persons.







# Communication and Information

## Why are communication and information important?

Staying connected with family, friends, events, news and activities with timely, accessible and practical information is a key part of active ageing. Communication and information in all its different forms supports an on-going connection with the world, through e.g. access to services, leisure and social participation, advocacy and practical advices.

Technology may however contribute to social exclusion. Affordable access to computers for seniors in community facilities and computer training adapted to senior's needs can help improve digital literacy, including a good understanding of the benefits of new technologies.

## Some concrete examples

Edmonton (Canada) is planning to develop age-friendly communication guidelines and templates for service providers, while ensuring that these tools address the diversity of the senior population.

Krakow (Poland) is running a webpage ([dlaseniora.krakow.pl](http://dlaseniora.krakow.pl)) to provide older inhabitants with information on the municipality's current events and activities for older persons, and dedicates pages of its monthly magazine [Krakow.pl](http://Krakow.pl) to older persons.



Portland (US) has set up a 24-Hour Helpline with a real person on the end of the line who provides information about services, events, social activities, and other issues that concern older adults. This hotline is viewed extremely positively by older adults, who greatly appreciate the accessibility of information and the personal touch.

In Stockholm (Sweden), the iPad café is for people aged between 65 and 95 years old, wanting to learn and become familiar with new technologies. Visitors can learn how to use tablets, what they can do with it, etc. with the help of the café's employees. The content of each iPad café is based upon the participants' wishes and needs.



# Community support and health services

## Why are community support and health services important?

Accessible and affordable community and social and health services are crucial to keep seniors healthy, independent and active. This involves an appropriate supply of care and social services that are conveniently located to where older people live, and of adequately trained health and social workers to provide these services.

A range of services along the continuum of care, such as preventive care, geriatric clinics, hospitals, adult day centres, respite care, rehabilitation, residential nursing home care, home care and palliative care, are needed to meet older persons' diverse needs.

## Some concrete examples

In Tampere (Finland), the “Kotitori” model provides one contact point for all homecare and home help services with easy access for older persons and their relatives. “Kotitori” integrates services provided by public, private and third sector providers. Older persons benefit from a tailored package of services with a chosen mix of public, private and third sector service provider and may add services linked to social activities and hobbies.



“Life Long Living” is a model for interaction implemented in Fredericia (Denmark) between the older citizens and the municipality, providing everyday rehabilitation and prevention, rather than just offering traditional and expensive compensatory care. The objective is to maintain physical, social and cognitive abilities in order to postpone age-related weakening and dependence.

Tallinn (Estonia) has developed a social alarm button service to increase the feeling of security of the older or disabled persons by using the mobile alarm button service. Clients can use the service in case of fall, unexpected medical need, or in situations requiring rescue service (fire, explosion etc.). It enables them to live as long as possible in their homes and it is substantially cheaper than taking care of the person in an institution.



# Outdoor spaces and built environment

## Why are outdoor spaces and buildings important?

Outdoor spaces and built environment are a key element of whether a place support, or hinder, physical activity, health, and wellbeing. They indeed have a major impact on the mobility, access to resources and services, social participation, independence, and in fine quality of life of older people as they go about their daily lives beyond the comfort of their homes.

A clean city with well-maintained recreational areas, ample rest areas, safe pedestrian routes and accessible building infrastructure provides an ideal living environment for seniors to age-in-place. This can encourage to older persons to better use the city's spaces and help them participate and interact with other residents. Moreover, adapting urban spaces and built environment is also beneficial for older tourists.

## Some concrete examples

Before installing new benches, Dijon (France) has organised 4 participatory meetings and visits before installing them in the City. 3 of these meetings targeted citizens, including older persons, to know which places would be best to install these benches. The City found out that places to sit were missing at the open air market. The last meeting was organised for the City's services to discuss how to install, make accessible and maintain the new benches in good state.



Aalbeke (Belgium) designed 4 outdoor walks indicated by simple signs boards for the community and in particular for persons with dementia.

In Tampere (Finland), the Nekala senior park, situated in an area densely populated by older persons, has accessible seating areas and wide paths. It also offers outdoor gym equipment and exercise tracks designed especially for older persons. Last but not least, plants and trees make the park relaxing and contribute to healthy and active ageing.



# Transportation

## Why is transportation important?

As people age, their mobility patterns change, in particular in later life. Accessible and affordable public transport is a key to ensure that older persons are able to age actively and remain engaged with their community and can access services such as medical care or shopping centres, in a word stay connected with the “real” world.

Transportation facilities are key to enable older persons to live independently and to prevent isolation. Driving conditions and parking facilities should also keep older drivers in mind considering private cars can be the only solution for older people living in rural areas.

## Some concrete examples



Ljubljana (Slovenia) has invested a lot in the accessibility of public transport and makes also available electric vehicles that are free-of-charge to older persons to move around the city centre.

Lyon (France) has created the “Cyclopousse”, an innovative pedicab that can transport two people to the destination of their choice in a perimeter of 500 meters to 1.5 kilometres and at a very low cost. The programme encourages labour market integration of drivers who are trained to welcome and help their older passengers.

Salzburg (Austria) has organised travel training days for older passengers, and training for public transport personnel to help older persons safely use public transport.

Tallinn (Estonia) implemented a “Free public transport” policy for its citizens. Not only does it benefit older people in their mobility, but they found out that it improved the local economy.



## How to make your City or Region more age-friendly?



Making your City or Region age-friendly implies coordinating different areas of policy and services so that they are mutually reinforcing.

A central aspect of the WHO age-friendly cities approach is to engage older persons in the assessment of the age-friendliness of all sectors (health, infrastructure, etc.) but also in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the requested changes.

The WHO has identified Guiding principles for your age-friendly journey:

- Listen to and involve older people
- Form alliances for age-friendliness
- Assess the age-friendliness of your community
- Plan collaboratively and around age-friendly outcomes
- Move to action: even small steps can go a long way

A number of guides and tool kits have been developed on the process of creating more age-friendly communities.

**Based in Europe? Join the AFE-INNOVNET Thematic Network!**



Being a member of AFE-INNOVNET Network will give you access to case studies, a directory of local and regional authorities already active in the field of age-friendly environments, tools to assess the socio-economic impact of age friendly environments, methodologies to involve older persons and local business, and much more. You will also have the opportunity to collaborate by providing your input to the Network's activities, share your experience and knowledge, and be in direct contact with other members of the Network.

Membership to AFE-INNOVNET Network is free. You may read more on why and how to join here <http://afeinnovnet.eu/about/Why-join-us> or contact Julia Wadoux, AFE-INNOVNET coordinator at [julia.wadoux@age-platform.eu](mailto:julia.wadoux@age-platform.eu) or +32 2 280 14 70.

You may also get updates on AFE-INNOVNET by subscribing to its newsletter on [www.afeinnovnet.eu](http://www.afeinnovnet.eu) homepage, or by following it on Twitter (@AFEINNOVNET) and LinkedIn.

## References:

### Housing:

- Brussels (Belgium): <http://www.inforhomes-asbl.be/>
- Nantes (France): <http://bit.ly/1ItE8TM>
- Alicante (Spain): <http://bit.ly/12HZxaL>

### Social participation

- Rotterdam (The Netherlands): <http://www.generationgames.com/>
- Geneva (Switzerland): <http://bit.ly/1qoRo6t>
- Geel (Belgium): <https://www.facebook.com/DeBetties>
- Warsaw (Poland): <http://daaproject.eu/projects/warsaw/english/>

### Respect and social inclusion

- Wales (UK): <http://www.agealliancewales.org.uk/>
- Bruges (Belgium): <http://www.dementievriendelijkbrugge.be/>
- Frederiksberg (Denmark): <http://bit.ly/1wuzSAo>

### Civic participation and employment

- Senior Enterprise Ireland <http://www.seniorenterprise.ie/>
- Prague (Czech Republic): <http://bit.ly/1Bvzbli>
- Reutlingen (Germany): <http://bit.ly/1yL0Cvi>

### Communication and information

- Edmonton (Canada): <http://bit.ly/1waYIHD>
- Krakow (Poland): [www.dlaseniora.krakow.pl](http://www.dlaseniora.krakow.pl)
- Portland (US): <http://bit.ly/131SY45>
- Stockholm (Sweden): <http://bit.ly/1ItL8QE>

### Community support and health services

- Tampere (Finland): <http://www.tampereenkotitori.fi/>
- Tallinn (Estonia): <http://www.tallinn.ee/Teenus-Panic-button-service>
- Fredericia (Denmark): <http://bit.ly/1seUqps>

### Outdoor spaces and built environment

- Dijon (France): <http://bit.ly/1yL3oRh>
- Aalbeke (Belgium): <http://bit.ly/1wW6i6p>
- Tampere (Finland): <http://bit.ly/1zIJwvv>

### Transportation

- Ljubljana (Slovenia): <http://bit.ly/1vzl9gw>
- Salzburg (Austria): <http://bit.ly/1AaseID>
- Lyon (France): <http://bit.ly/1vzlrE0>
- Tallinn (Estonia): <http://www.tallinn.ee/eng/tasutauhistransport/>

Notes



For further information, please visit the AFE-INNOVNET website [www.afeinnovnet.eu](http://www.afeinnovnet.eu)