MOBILITY SCOUTS

Engaging older people in creating an age-friendly environment

Report on research in Italy

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Ageing is nothing for cowards
Mae West

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1. Aims and objectives

In 2060, almost one third of the European population will be 65 years or older. Ageing is thus not only an individual, but also a societal challenge. One very important factor is that of participation: The chance to participate in our society at various levels is crucial for an active, meaningful and healthy life in older age.

Age-friendliness, that means accessible and available services and environments, is obviously a major prerequisite for participation. Public authorities and service providers are responsible for and profit from making their services and public spaces more accessible to all – including older citizens and customers. Older people as experts of their own life know best how services and public spaces should be designed and organised to meet their needs. They want their voices be heard, their experiences be acknowledged and their skills be actively used and valued.

The overall objective of the project Mobility Scouts is to involve older men and women in decision-making processes and empower them to contribute to the creation of age-friendly environments and services as co-producers. In order to reach this goal, older men and women will be trained to initiate co-production processes. As "agents of change" Mobility Scouts bring together older citizens and local authorities and service providers to cooperate in the development of age-friendly environments and services.

The research part of the Mobility Scouts project intends to lay a solid basis in achieving these aims. It aims at collating the state-of-the-art in the co-production of seniors concerning the age-friendliness of their environment. Thus is refers to the issues "participation and self-determination of older people" as key requirements for active citizenship and "accessibility of urban environments". It contains the investigation of

- Solutions in making an environmend age- friendly (e.g. accessibility of services, public spaces and buildings; age-friendly businesses; mobility of older people in the community; lifelong learning opportunities)
- Initiatives promoting empowerment and engagement of older people in the community (e.g. projects/initiatives valuing the intellectual capital and experience of the older persons, promoting social participation or a better involvement of older people in the planning and development of services)
- Skills needed in the co-production of age-friendly environments
- Supportive framework conditions and institutional settings for active seniors to make their co-production efforts effective

Based on this newly gained knowledge, conclusions will be derived for the design of the training package.

The research phase was also to be used for getting in contact with older men and women interested in working as Mobility Scouts as well as stakeholders interested in cooperation (e.g. local authorities, companies that are interested in the field of mobility of older people, public transport providers, public point of contact for complaints, seniors office, mobility agencies).

This report summarizes the results from the different research methods for the mentioned topics under study. Following the description of the methodology, the results of desk research as well as interviews with experts and very old citizens will be presented. Finally, conclusions for the design of the training package are derived.

2. Methodology

2.1 Design of research tools

In order to reach the aforementioned aims, desk research was performed for a general overview; specific topics were investigated by expert interviews. Based on a draft research plan, the design of research tools and their application was jointly discussed during the kick-off meeting and finalised afterwards.

The following lead questions have guided the elaboration of research tasks:

1. Desk research
   - What is the state of the art concerning the active participation of seniors in the decision-making process and co-production of age-friendly environments?
     - In research
     - At political level
     - At practical level
   - What kind of innovative projects and initiatives have already been implemented?
     - In partner countries
     - At European level

2. Expert interviews – the following lead questions were translated into Italian and used for all interviews:

   - Which environmental conditions are important for older people to actively participate in community life?
   - If not yet answered: What should be done to make public areas more accessible and more age-friendly?
   - Are there any possibilities in this city, in other cities and/or regions you know of, for older people to file complaints about hard-to-access services, public spaces, buildings or businesses, forward ideas for improvements, participate in consumer organizations or (senior) advisory boards ?
   - Do you know initiatives, projects or institutions in this city, in other cities or on a regional level you know of, which involve older people as experts of their living environment? How are these activities organized?
   - The idea of the project "Mobility Scouts" is to enable older people to initiate co-production processes and - together with older men and women as well as with local authorities and companies - assess and improve the age-friendliness of public spaces, services and information. How do you consider such a project for his city, other cities or regions?

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   - We are going to train older men and women to function as Mobility Scouts: Which skills and competences do they need to initiate co-production processes and involve other older men and women, local authorities and companies?
   - Which kind of projects could be initiated by the "Mobility Scouts"? Do you have a concrete idea that could be implemented in your living environment, in cooperation with your and/or other organizations?

• If the expert is an older man or woman, who might be interested in becoming active as Mobility Scout: Do you have a concrete idea, which you would like to realize?

• Which kind of support do Mobility Scouts need from your point of view?

• Which kind of institutional setting would make the work of "Mobility Scouts" effective?

• As we mentioned before, we would like to actively involve local authorities and companies in our project. How do you consider the interest of relevant stakeholders in the issue? Why is the issue important – or not important – to them?

• If not clarified before the interview: Do you know relevant stakeholders, existing groups or older men and women that might be interested in getting involved in the project?

• Are you interested in supporting the project and becoming active as Mobility Scout / stakeholder supporting Mobility Scouts?

2.2   Procedures

The individual working steps were performed in each country in parallel. For the collation of results, templates were developed to ensure their comparability across countries (see Annexes 1 and 2).

In Italy the following procedures were applied:

The desk research was performed on the internet using the following key words in different combinations:

• **Age-friendly cities**

• **Anziani agenti di cambiamento** (Elderly agents of change)

• **Anziani partecipazione sociale attiva** (Elderly active social participation)

• **Autodeterminazione vita sociale anziani** (Elderly social life self-determination)

• **Comitati anziani** (Elderly committees)

• **EU active senior citizenship**

• **Mobilità locale sostenibile anziani** (Local sustainable mobility elderly)

• **Partecipazione anziani vita pubblica** (Elderly's participation in public life)

• **Politiche amiche anziani** (Old age friendly policies)

• **Progetti co-produzione anziani** (Old people co-production projects)

Twelve expert interviews were performed, face-to-face or by e-mail.

3. Results of desk research and interviews

3.1 Co-production of seniors in age-friendly environments

"Co-production" is still quite marginal in Italian research, political discussions and innovative experiences. "Co-production of seniors" even more so: in this perspective the Mobility Scouts experience may prove path-opening well beyond its target groups.

3.1.1 State of the art in research

Limited to very few academic centers – Trento University, Turin State university, Milan Bocconi University, Naples Federico II University as "Il welfare del futuro" (The welfare of the future) - http://www.lavorosociale.com/archivio/n/articolo/co-produzione-il-welfare-del-futuro - "Welfare innovativo in co-produzione" (Innovative welfare in co-production) - http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/tecnologie/2014-12-10/welfare-innovativo-co-produzione-063922.shtml?uuid=AB3DfaOC – based on the principle "Chi utilizza i servizi dovrebbe contribuire a produrli" (Service uses should contribute ro produce them) - https://www.nextpa.it/it/la-co-produzione-dei-servizi-pubblici-questa-sconosciuta/

Milan's *Cariplo Foundation* – one of the world's largest bank foundations – funds co-production welfare programmes: http://www.fondazionecariplo.it/en/projects/cross-sector/index.html

3.1.2 Issues of political discussions

"Co-production" as such is for the time being no issue of political discussions, which rather address such topics as "Old age friendly policies"; "Active ageing"; "Active senior citizenship"; "Elderly-friendly mobility" and, it should be added, mostly in the local perspective, as decision-making is part of the competences of regional / local authorites: still it leaves one speechless to see that the new website of the national Ministry for Labour and Social Policies does not include the elderly among its "themes and priorities": http://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/Pagine/default.aspx

Two Italian cities are recognized as "age-friendly" by the WHO as part of its "Global network of Age friendly cities and communities" initiative – we include, from the

WHO extranet, the self-descriptions of their main activities because they mirror the current main Italian topics of political discussion.

Imperia - https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/network/imperia/

Since 2001/2002 Imperia already joined specific project for Active Ageing because it believes that this issue, seen as the inclusion of health opportunities of older people, both important and necessary. In 2015 three series of special programs have been launched concerning: lifelong learning, psychological well-being, and some of the social activities related to the solidarity between generations. For 2016 the following projects have been conducted: computer classes and acting classes for lifelong learning sector; for the theme health and wellness instead will start gentle exercise classes and walking groups; for engagement in volunteer projects we have the goal instead of social inclusion and solidarity between generations, so that the elderly can live this stage of his life in a more active way possible.

Udine - https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/network/udine/

Citizens of the Renaissance city of Udine are living longer, amplifying a demographic trend in the whole of Italy. In the last decades Udine has experienced a steady growth of its elderly population, the old age index having stabilized about 15 years ago to a little over 200 and the older people representing 31.6% of the total population. Nowadays senior citizens in Udine are therefore a very important segment of the population. Since healthy life expectancy has not increased in parallel to life expectancy itself, elderly people often require greater health and social assistance. However, provided aging is conceived as still an active phase in life, senior citizens can become a truly valuable civic asset in developing a sustainable, responsible, and morally resilient society.

For this reason our city has been very much committed to promoting Active & Healthy Ageing, by being part of European and international networks and by raising awareness about this theme at the local level. The result has been a series of actions

and activities to be included in a systematic and strategic policy aimed at promoting older people's healthy ageing and at better meeting their needs. Taking the older age group as a priority area, different approaches were combined to raise awareness on demographic ageing. The most important actions undertaken have been:

- *Becoming a member of the Age-Friendly Cities Network and of the Healthy Ageing Task Force within the WHO Healthy Cities Programme (since 2004 Udine is also the leading city) with the aim of sharing knowledge, tools and experiences with cities and developing new actions to face the demographic change.*
- *Producing a Healthy Ageing Profile, whose goal was to allow for an overall understanding of the local context and to provide evidence as a basis for setting priorities and taking decisions. The profile provides quantitative and qualitative information on the health and the living circumstances of older people and has lead to the development of a stable healthy ageing city observatory.*
- *Mapping the distribution of the elderly on the city territory (using GIS) and matching with the provision of public, health and social services offered to the community (such as general practitioners, post offices, free time opportunities, care centres, chemist's, bus stops, etc.), by designing the "health maps" of the urban environment.*
- *Pioneering the 'Vancouver Protocol' which asked citizens, caregivers and services providers to evaluate characteristics of an age-friendly city in eight different domains and suggest inprovements. Results were incorporated into the WHO Global Guide and used locally to determine investment priorities. Udine also participated in a pilot study on measuring the age-*

friendliness of cities that fed into a new guide *on using core indicators developed by the WHO Centre for Health Development.*

- *Carrying out a European project on Healthy Ageing within the URBACT programme, aimed at sharing, improving and transferring good practices among cities (Edinburgh, Brighton & Hove, Grand Poitiers, Klaipeda).*
- *Joining the Covenant on Demographic Change (December 2015) and participating in the activities of many European Organisation and programmes, such as AFE-INNOVNET, the European Innovation Partnership, the Joint Programming Initiative (JPI) Urban Europe, the AGE Platform Europe, the AFEE – Age Friendly Environments in Europe.*
- *Promoting opportunities for older people to remain physically, mentally and socially active as long as possible through actions and initiatives at the local level. The city of Udine has tried to create supportive environments and established patterns for healthy living through food and mobility policies oriented to the elderly. A number of projects have been started to enable and encourage increasing physical and mental activity among population in later years as a very effective way of preventing and lowering the high costs associated with health and social services and fostering intergenerational relationships.*

3.1.3 Innovative projects and initiatives

1. **Talent Italy –** since 2014 by the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research – in co-operation with the EU-supported Active and Assisted Living (AAL) programme. https://www.talentitaly.it/la-sfida-sulla-open-education/la-sfida - To promote innovation based on the Internet of Things capable of improving autonomy and quality of life of older adults, with the focus on active aging: a prize worth € 50,000.00 euro aimed to support innovative ideas, develop prototypes and business models. The prize aims to encourage innovative technological approaches, to meet the new market challenges and opportunities associated with aging. Each proposal should present a commercial solution which improves connectivity between older adults, devices and technologies related to any aspect of their lives: home, social, work, study, transport or services. Innovations must involve older adults in the development and testing of the technology.

2. **Roma ascolta Roma** (Rome listens to Rome) – by the Rome City Government. A bottom-up listening exercise launched in 2017 including elderly citizens, to draw up the "City Social Plan", to promote and support projects based on the citizens' expressed needs. A permanent listening with the planned regular revision of the Plan on the basis of new needs emerging - http://newsgo.it/2017/01/sociale-raggi-baldassarre-presentano-progetto-roma-ascolta-roma/

3.2 The Mobility Scouts concept

3.2.1 Expert assessment of the conceptual approach

Positive, useful and necessary.

3.2.2 Working areas for Mobility Scouts

Age-friendly mobility; participation in projects and activities during the yearly September European sustainable mobility week, http://www.mobilityweek.eu/; mapping age barriers in the neighborhood and suggest improvement proposals; the management of public spaces; personal well-being policies and programmes; intergenerational initiatives: with schools, media, the arts, free-time activities, foreign language learning; advocacy for elderly's rights.

3.2.3 Supporting conditions and institutional settings for Mobility Scouts

Recognition by relevant institutions that Mobility Scouts is a useful initiative and may contribute to better living conditions for and with elderly citizens and their interaction with other age groups in the community.

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3.2.4 Skills needed by Mobility Scouts

Motivation and ability to motivate; ability to be empathic and communicate; creativity; self-esteem and not being afraid of dealing / negotiating with representatives of local authorities and companies responsible for local services.

3.2.5 Relevant stakeholders and potential cooperation partners at the pilot locations

Local governments' decision-makers; local service providers' companies; elderly centers; elderly rights NGOs; individual senior citizens active with age-friendliness issues.

4.   Conclusions and recommendations for the design of the training

A. Share and learn from co-production success stories already implemented in other communities, domestically and in the EU.

B. Be informed about the basic facts and figures, who-is-who, decision-making processes and official policies of the community Mobility Scouts are going to act in.

C. Be informed on major EU and international initiatives (the AGE Platform Europe, the EU policy guidelines, the WHO age-friendly cities) to feel part of a larger picture and have arguments when dealing with local authorities.

D. Brainstorm and come up with own project proposals.

E. Dos and donts when approaching, involving and advocating for age-friendly environments.

F. Identify and involve charismatic older persons living in the community.

G. Inform and activate local media from the very beginning of the co-production projects.

H. Networking, networking, networking: with all the NGOs, trade unions, local businesses, universities, churches, migrants' groups, formal and informal learning and free-time realities.

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