

# Isolation to Inclusion



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## **From Isolation to Inclusion – Promoting Innovation in Re-Integrating Older Citizens into Community Life in 6 European model regions**

Major societal changes will take effect in the near future as Europe's population ages, migration increases and the trend towards the de-institutionalisation of family life rises. The unprecedented rise in the overall share of old and very old people will increase their risk of isolation.

Self-help or voluntary work initiatives in the area of community care have helped to (re-) integrate socially excluded older men and women into community life. However, ways must be found to encourage professional providers of social care and health to co-ordinate their activities with those by self-help structures and voluntary work so that all parties involved maximise their specific strengths for the good of the elderly affected by or at risk of exclusion and isolation. Governments at regional and local level must be persuaded to develop the framework to achieve this synergy.

### **The i2i project**

The i2i project was launched in September 2005 within the framework of the Second Trans-national Exchange Programme of the European Commission, 2005 – 2007 (DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities). Its aim is promote measures that will help re-integrate older men and women into community life who are concerned by or at high risk of social exclusion.

In each country a government and an external consultancy organisation co-operate at regional level. By combining political impetus, expert know-how and direct links into practice, we intend to increase the chances for a successful implementation of socio-political measures in favour of isolated old persons.

<b>Austria:</b>	Municipality of Graz and the Federal Ministry of Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection in cooperation with Queraum, Vienna. Project region: City of Graz
<b>Czech Republic:</b>	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in cooperation with Zivot 90, Prague. Project region: Hradec Kralove,
<b>Germany:</b>	State of Hessen in cooperation with ISIS – Institut für Soziale Infrastruktur, Frankfurt am Main. Project region: Rhine-Main Area
<b>Italy:</b>	Emilia-Romagna Regional Government in cooperation with Lunaria, Rome. Project region. Emilia Romagna

- Lithuania:** Federal Ministry of Social Security and Labour in cooperation with Pagyvenusios moters veiklos centras, Kaunas. Project region: Kaunas and Vilnius
- United Kingdom:** UK Government, Department for Work and Pensions in cooperation with Experience Corps. Project region: City of Bristol in Southwest region

### About the regions

A diversity of aspects was taken into consideration when European regions were selected. All regions are characterised in at least some of their parts by problems of poverty, an above-average ageing ratio or high unemployment rates. A general need for the development of social infrastructure appears especially for rural parts of areas like the region of Hradec Kralove in the Czech Republic or the Rhine-Main area in Germany, but also in the course of city developments such as in the area of Vilnius and Kaunas in Lithuania. In addition to that, urban regions such as Graz and Bristol include an agglomeration of especially vulnerable old people, e.g. ethnic minority elder or very old women living alone.

The Rhine-Main area in Germany has both rural and urban characteristics and innovative concepts as well as communities with strong deficits in their development can be found there. Emilia-Romagna is the most advanced Italian region for the work in the areas addressed by the i2i project. Its regional government has joined the partnership as one of Hessen's EU twinning partners with long-standing fruitful co-operation in several social policy fields.

### Envisaged outcomes

Our work focuses on the identification and improvement of measures that will enable groups at a multi-dimensional risk of social exclusion to fully participate in community life. Major importance is given to strengthening initiatives by older persons for older persons and on supporting networks of these initiatives. Special attention will be given to social networks created by civic engagement. The project will produce:

- **An Inventory of Innovation:** good ideas and practices to empower older people at the highest risk of social exclusion published on the project's website to raise awareness of and to support initiatives all over Europe.
- **Regional Action Plans for Inclusion and Re-Integration of Older Citizens into Community Life** developed at regional level by representatives of the target groups and relevant stakeholders (e.g. self-interest groups, policy makers, NGOs).
- **Guidelines on development and implementation of the Regional Action Plans** published on the project's website to provide an insight into how such an Action Plan may be developed within a specific regional setting.

The i2i project aims not only to strengthen older people's empowerment and highlight participation issues at local and regional level, but also to inform National Action Plans (NAPs). Therefore we will systematically involve actors who are responsible for the development of the future NAPs as well as representatives of the European Commission.

## **i2i in progress**

In all of the pilot regions,

- Quick scan reports on policy documents and social science studies have been elaborated and will be published on the i2i website shortly.
- Expert interviews on the status quo as well as the desirable actions to be taken are in the process of being carried out and analysed.
- Regional Action Committees are being set up and will start their work in the next few weeks.
- Information on innovative measures in favour of older isolated men and women is being collated and prepared for publication on the i2i website.

Draft Regional Action Plans will be developed in the summer of 2006. These drafts will be presented and jointly further developed at the second trans-national conference in October 2006, with the aim of them being implemented in 2007.

The database of the i2i project is open to examples of good practice from other countries and regions. To publish information on interesting initiatives, please use the website.

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