

invisible talents!

Encouraging and
recognising the
contributions of
people 80+

“Everybody
has something
to give”



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ABOUT THIS BROCHURE

Introduction

As you have picked up this brochure, you were probably attracted by its title: **Everybody has something to give**. This is the shortened version of a quote we collected in one of our previous projects:

“Everybody has something to give and contribute to his or her networks and communities - regardless of his or her age.”

This was the guiding idea of our project *invisible talents*. And this brochure is one of the outputs of this project.

Invisible treasures

invisible talents is based on the observation that older and especially very old people tend to become invisible in our society. They have left the workforce, they are less present on our streets, they have almost vanished from the media. The older a person gets the more he/she is less likely to be regarded as someone who has something to give and to participate meaningfully.

In contrast to that, we think that **everybody** has something to give. Older and very old people carry with them a treasure of memories, experiences, knowledge and competencies ('talents'). And we wanted to contribute to the (re-)detection of this treasure for the mutual benefit of both the older people and the contexts they live in. We wanted to support organisations – mostly those working directly with very old people – and communities to:

- SELF-REFLECT THE STATUS QUO OF PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THEIR ORGANISATION.
- DEVELOP CONCRETE ACTIONS AND ACTIVITIES THAT PROMOTE THE ENGAGEMENT OF THEIR TARGET GROUPS AND MAKE THEIR TALENTS VISIBLE.

The *invisible talents* project was supported by the **ERASMUS+** programme and was carried out from October 2018 to September 2020 by five partners in five EU countries: **queraum. cultural and social research** (Austria), **ISIS Sozialforschung · Sozialplanung · Politikberatung** (Germany), **Lunaria** (Italy), **Vytauto Didziojo Universitetas** (Lithuania) and **Stichting Bij de Tijd** (Netherlands). The project is also supported by **AGE Platform Europe**.

Together, we developed overall concepts and specific tools. At the regional levels, we cooperated with a variety of organisations and chose individual approaches and methods to stimulate self-reflection and activities. The experiences we collected in this process were brought together again at the European level and transformed into concrete outputs like this brochure.



“We tend to look at deficits and problems. We hear too often that we are not able to do this or that. However, it is very important to focus on talents and resources and appreciate them in a special way. That's exactly what people often miss - in each age group.” *Cooperation partner in Austria*

Get inspired to act

With this publication we want to raise awareness, combat negative stereotyping and make older people and their contributions to their communities visible. We want to inspire organisations, initiatives and communities to get active and facilitate the participation of older and very old people and to encourage older people themselves to make use of their talents and get involved.

With this brochure we want to inspire:

- ORGANISATIONS, STAKEHOLDERS, CIVIL SOCIETY, POLICYMAKERS AND COMPANIES THAT INFLUENCE THE (FURTHER) DEVELOPMENT OF SERVICES FOR OLDER PEOPLE AT VARIOUS LEVELS
- INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANISATIONS WORKING WITH AND PROVIDING SERVICES TO OLDER PEOPLE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT INSPIRING EXAMPLES OF HOW TO PROMOTE THE CONTRIBUTION OF OLDER PEOPLE
- OLDER PEOPLE INTERESTED IN THE POTENTIAL OF BEING INVOLVED AND CONTRIBUTING TO THEIR COMMUNITIES

We have collected a variety of activities carried out with inspired and inspiring organisations. These activities represent little – and sometimes bigger – steps

towards the increased visibility of older men and women and show the creative potential in those organisations, their staff and the older participants themselves (see chapter **GREAT LITTLE ACTIVITIES**).

We have also collected a small choice of initiatives outside of *invisible talents* we wanted to share with you (see chapter **INSPIRATION BEYOND**).

The pictures and quotes in this brochure are also results of our project or have been provided by our cooperation partners. They should give a very direct connection to older men and women and the voices and talents they contribute to their communities.

We hope that the various examples in this brochure will inspire many more organisations and communities and nudge many in Europe to take steps towards the full participation of older and very old people.



“It is very important to have ‘ordinary’ people over 80+ and their diverse abilities publicly present or present in public discourse.” *Cooperation partner in Germany*

OUR MISSION

Visibility and social participation of (very) old people

Demography

Demography is very clear: Like other developed regions of the world, the age profile of the EU population is undergoing a massive change. Between the early 1960s and today, the life expectancy of both men and women in the EU has increased by over 10 years. The working population is expected to decline every year till 2060 and the proportion of people 80+ is expected to more than double by 2050 to 11.4 %.¹ Given these numbers, ageing is thus not only an individual adventure but also a societal, political and economic challenge that we as a society should and want to be prepared for in time and in many creative ways.

Ageism

Although older people are a significant and growing part of our population, older men and women face ageism – stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination against them on the basis of their age. Often, they are overlooked, marginalised and excluded. This is not necessarily done in bad faith but because of common stereotypes that frame older people as frail, in need of protection

and under-performing. Ageism is harmful; it leads to barriers to the full participation of older people and even has negative effects on their health and well-being.²

Social participation

Social participation is an important concept with regard to age and/or ageing. Usually, social participation is regarded as vital for people of all ages as it leads to self-actualisation and the achievement of goals. In connection with age(ing), it has proven, for example, to be a very important component of health: Research shows that quality of life, health and even mortality are related to the social participation of older people. But what is social participation? A recent concept analysis suggests the following:

“[...] the defining attributes of the concept of elderly people’s social participation included emphasis on community-based activities and interpersonal interactions, based on resource sharing, active participation and individual satisfaction.”³

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- 1 European Union (2019): Demographic outlook for the European Union 2019 (In-depth analysis, European Parliamentary Research Service), Brussels.
 - 2 www.who.int/ageing/ageism/en/
 - 3 Manijeh Dehi Aroogh, Farahnaz Mohammadi Shahboulaghi (2020): Social Participation in Older Adults: A Concept Analysis (International Journal of Community Based Nursing and Midwifery, 2020, 8(1)) pp. 55–72. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6969951/

Meaningful contributions

To put it very simply: As an ageing society, it is in all our interests to work on positive images of age(ing) – images that counteract stereotypes and ageist discrimination, images that contribute to meaningful, healthy and dignified lives of older citizens. But we do not only work for our own present or future as older people but also for a society that is firmly based on the idea of social cohesion and human rights.

We believe that giving older people the opportunity to (re-)discover and contribute all the experience, knowledge and talents they have acquired in their long lives – as men and women with families, friends, paid and voluntary work, studies, hobbies and passions – makes our society richer and more colourful, and much more aware of its history, the present and the future.

OUR APPROACH

The *invisible talents* project

The main idea and objective of our project was to make the talents of older and very old people – in communities and organisations – (more) visible and to enhance their social participation.

“The project is important as it makes visible and focuses on the special competencies of very old people.” *Cooperation partner in Germany*



What do we mean by ‘talents’?

‘Talent’ is the key term or concept in our project. When speaking about the ‘talents’ of older and very old people, we do not refer to innateness, special and spectacular gifts of nature. On the contrary, we have a very broad and multifaceted understanding of ‘talents’ and use it as a collective term for experiences, knowledge, competencies and interests of older and very old people. In our understanding, talents can be developed, (re-)detected and shared with people around us. And we believe that retrieving these talents and making them visible is profitable – for the talented seniors as well as for their communities, neighbourhoods and organisations.

The *invisible talents* project aimed at supporting older people in (re-)detecting and sharing their talents and at inspiring key persons and organisations to open up and make room for these talents.

“Thank you for asking about talents. Normally nobody cares about that. Now that I also talk about it, I realise how much I like doing this.”
Participant in the Netherlands



“I like the definition of invisible talents, it made me think.”

Cooperation partner in Italy



Who was the *invisible talents* project for?

With the *invisible talents* project, we addressed mainly staff and volunteers of health and social service providers in residential and/or community settings as well as citizens' initiatives working with and for older people, e.g.

- CLUBS AND ASSOCIATIONS AT COMMUNITY LEVEL
- SENIORS CENTRES
- ADULT EDUCATION PROVIDERS
- SENIORS ASSOCIATIONS AND THEIR REPRESENTATIVES
- SOCIAL SERVICES, WELFARE AND COMMUNITY-BUILDING ORGANISATIONS
- MUNICIPALITIES
- PUBLIC INITIATIVES
- (THIRD AGE) UNIVERSITIES
- COMMUNITY CENTRES

Our teams in the five partner countries worked with staff members and volunteers and with older and very old people themselves in various settings. Together, they developed and tested many different methods and tools and carried out activities to raise awareness on the importance of increased visibility and social participation of older citizens.

Some methods and tools can be found in our [Toolbox](#). In the following chapters we give an insight into the activities carried out with our cooperation partners in Austria, Germany, Italy, Lithuania and the Netherlands.

“I was very enthusiastic about the workshop and what we learnt. I started to use the methods and the whole approach in my work with older volunteers.” *Workshop participant in Austria*



How was the *invisible talents* project implemented? And what are the results?

The *invisible talents* project was carried out in five European countries. At the European level, the partnership developed the general concepts and approaches. At the national and regional levels, those approaches were translated into concrete methods and tools that fitted the situation and needs of the cooperation partners – those organisations and communities that were interested in enhancing the visibility and social participation of older people. The experiences and results from the national activities were brought back to the European level and transformed into outputs.

The partnership developed tools that supported organisations and communities to reflect on their status quo regarding the active involvement of older people and possibilities to make their strengths and contributions visible. The partners accompanied and supported this reflection process (e.g. with ‘Reflection Workshops’ or individual meetings) and helped to develop concrete activities. There was a great selection of activities, based on the needs and prerequisites of the respective contexts. One of the next chapters gives an insight into best practice examples of these ‘great little activities.’

The following outputs from the *invisible talents* project are available:

- The *invisible talents* team has developed an **Online Self-Reflection Tool** – a quick, free and anonymous online test that allows organisations to see in a few minutes how they are doing with regard to the participation of older people and to start a reflection process about possible ways to improve this participation. Try the online test on our website: www.invisible-talents.eu/online-test/
- Our **Fact Sheet** provides information about the project, raises awareness on the issue and inspires with a small choice of interesting examples.
- You will find information on the methods used by the organisations and older people in the self-reflection processes, e.g. in workshops, in the **Toolbox**. These tools will help you, for example, how to fight ageism, how to (re-)discover wishes and interests and how to take a step towards the increased visibility of older men and women.
- Our **e-Presentation** provides background information, inspirational examples and practical tools to increase the visibility of older people’s talents in their communities and in organisations.

All outputs are available in five languages (Dutch, English, German, Italian, Lithuanian) and can be found on the *invisible talents* website: www.invisible-talents.eu/outcomes/

“I noticed that I have simply started to smile more when I visit my client.” *Workshop participant in Lithuania*



GREAT LITTLE
ACTIVITIES
Results from the
invisible talents
project

In this chapter we give an insight into the practical work done in our *invisible talents* project. In the five partner countries our teams cooperated closely with organisations and communities in ‘little activities’ to boost the visibility and estimation of older men and women. We cooperated with very different organisations and provided very individual support, tailored to the needs of the respective (institutional) contexts and people. But before we look at the examples from the partner countries, we have to clarify one issue:

What do we mean by ‘little activities’?

When we worked with organisations, it was very important both for us and them to stress the fact that making talents visible does not require huge sums of money and other resources or major organisational transformations. No organisation or community should be ‘afraid’ of tackling the issue of (in)visibility. Sometimes, a change of perspective or a shift in daily routines could make a difference and foster a culture of appreciation. To sum it up:

‘Little activities’

- DO NOT INVOLVE HIGH EXTRA COSTS,
- CAN BE INTEGRATED INTO DAILY ROUTINES AND
- ARE BASED ON RESOURCES ALREADY AVAILABLE IN AN ORGANISATION (E.G. EVENTS, MEDIA, TRAINING PROGRAMMES, ACTIVITIES).

Below you will find examples from all five participating countries, which are very different and ‘custom-made’. Some of them are single interventions, others are longer in-depth collaborations with older people and/or staff members.

It is important to stress that in our workshops and meetings with the cooperation partners, ideas for many more ‘little activities’ than those presented here have been developed. These included ideas for reaching out to the communities, e.g. use empty spaces in the town centre to showcase the talents of older people (exhibitions, lectures etc.) or for internal inspiration, e.g. ‘Talent of the month’ notice on the notice board or in the internal newspaper of a nursing home.

If you have any questions about the activities and the concepts behind them, please contact the respective national partner for further information. The list of partners and their contact details can be found in the front section of this publication.

On the next page: group photo *Dream Factory* participants, made by Herman Brand, volunteer and in-house photographer from *Modestraat*

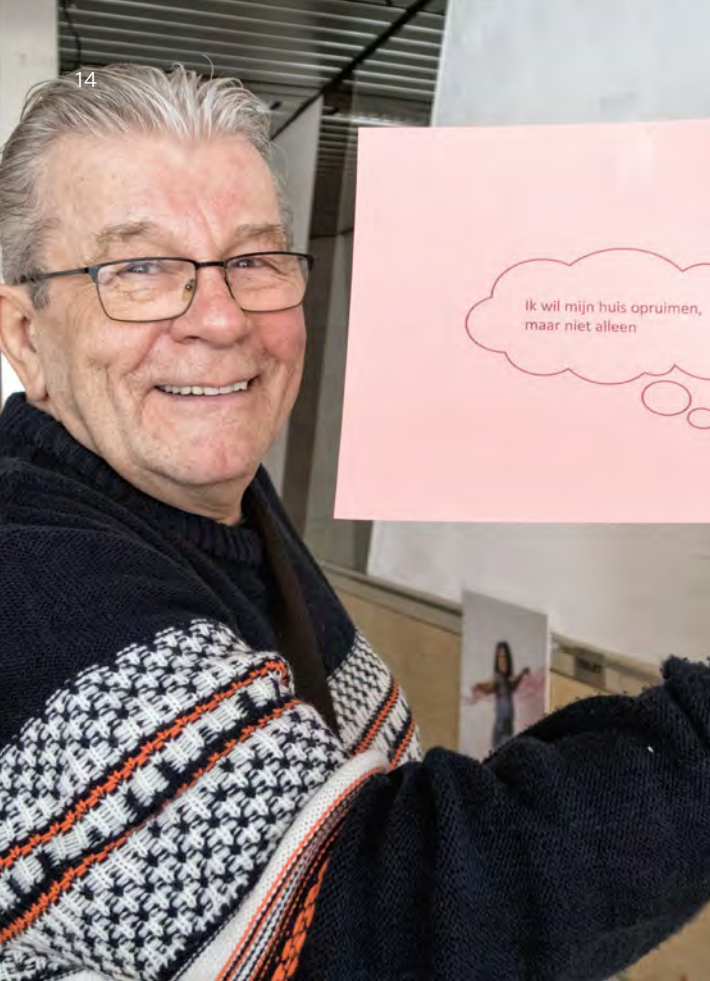
The Dream Factory - Amsterdam pilot (Netherlands)

“The new project *Dream Factory* urges us to keep thinking and talking about what we would still secretly like. Because letting your imagination run free means being alive. And some dreams can still be realised.” *Participant in the Netherlands*

- **AIM:** The pilot *Dream Factory* aims to stir up and make visible the ‘giving power’ of (very) old women and men. Activities focus on a group of older and (very) old people discovering and sharing their wishes, dreams and ideals and helping each other to fulfil them.
- **STAFF AND OLDER PEOPLE INVOLVED:** 42 people (aged 23-91)

The Dream Factory was developed in cooperation with *Modestraat*, a cultural breeding space and community centre in Amsterdam - North. Based on recommendations in three preceding workshops with participants of the *Sweet 70* club, students (Applied Social Gerontology and Nursing) and a welfare organisation, the Dutch ***invisible talents*** team decided to make room for a ‘nomadic learning process’ that refrains from a detailed scenario and relies on more improvisational work based on perspectives, opportunities and possibilities that emerge along the way. The programme started in November 2019 and encompassed ten *Dream*





“What a lucky thing that I ended up at Modestraat. I go to the Photo Club and the Dream Factory. As a volunteer at the Lunch Restaurant I get a lot of appreciation and recognition and that is so nice.”

Herman B. (71), is always on the go. He is a volunteer at the Lunch Restaurant, has been taken lessons at the photo club of *Sweet 70* and has recently become the regular photographer at *Modestraat*, Amsterdam. He also helps ‘Sweeties’ (member *Sweet 70*) who have questions about their phone, iPad and computer. Herman believes it is important to keep in touch with people, especially if there is no one at home to talk to, to keep going and never give up.

Factory meetings with a group of eight older people. Before the joint work, an interview was held with each prospective participant to clarify the expectations of both sides. The meetings were moderated by two persons in a relaxed and safe atmosphere. Every meeting started with a poem brought and read by a participant. Participants recorded their personal notes in logbooks which were provided. The moderators used various working methods (e.g. *Quality Relay*, *Fruit Basket*, *House of Identity*) to support the participants to (re)discover their wishes and dreams and to inspire mutual support and empowerment. *The Dream Factory* activities turned out to be a completely new experience for the participants; most had never experienced anything like it and could hardly imagine

what it was like. It was remarkable that some indicated that they were looking for a group of friends. They hoped to find it at the *Dream Factory*.

Seven meetings were held, but then because of Covid-19 the community centre closed down in early March 2020.

“I miss eating in *Modestraat* and the *Salvation Army*. But what I miss most is the conviviality and the fine conversations of the *Dream Factory*. It is a small group that has more depth. At the *Dream Factory* I can bare my soul and it stays there.” Participant *Dream Factory* in interview, May 2020

Resources: Many of the methods used at the *Dream Factory* meetings are part of our **Toolbox** that can be downloaded from the project website.

Dream Factory meeting - I have a Dream! (Netherlands)

- **AIM:** To formulate, share and visualise dreams, wishes, which everyone in a group wants to work on; Make dreams and wishes visible in a creative way, for instance collages to be presented to the group.
- **STAFF AND OLDER PEOPLE INVOLVED:** 10 people (age range 55-91)

Sheets with clouds drawn on them hang on the wall; these contain dreams that were mentioned by *Dream Factory* participants in a previous meeting, supplemented with some dreams from the preliminary try-out workshop. Empty dream clouds lie on the table. Each participant removes one dream cloud from the wall: the dream he/she wants to continue with. Directly after,

everyone is invited to create a collage, cut and pasted from old magazines, that visualises the dream as well as possible. All the collages are hung on the wall. Participants take time to look at the collages calmly, they reflect on them and ask each other questions based on the images and words on the collages. Participants compliment each other on the collages. This activity works particularly well if the moderators also make a collage; it turns out that dreams do not have to be realistic; the conversation about it seems worth as much; sharing may be more important than realising dreams. The most beautiful stories spontaneously come to the table while pasting and cutting. The group indicated that they want to continue meeting each other after the *Dream Factory* meetings end.



Dream Factory participant presenting Dream collage



Dream Factory participants share tips and tricks to keep going in Corona times (Netherlands)

- **AIM:** Making visible how (very) old people living at home keep going in a time of increased ‘invisibility and social distance’ because of the Coronavirus lockdown; counteract the image of ‘vulnerable’ high-risk group
- **STAFF AND OLDER PEOPLE INVOLVED:** 9 people (age range 55-91)

The *Dream Factory* participants are also part of the *Sweet 70* Community, based at *Modestraat*. To cheer up the *Sweet 70* Community tulips were delivered to their homes.

The *Sweet 70* members are regularly informed of developments. A group app has been created. And there are many calls among themselves. Marja now cooks twice a week for some ‘Sweeties’. Because we were curious about how they are doing, the *Dream Factory* participants were interviewed, while maintain social distance, about how they keep going in coronavirus times.

Tips from this group (aged 68-91):

“Call each other, do not wait, find digital contact, maintain social distance, watch TV, go for a walk, but not all at the same time and move! Sit back in the sun. Hold on.”

Are you curious to learn more about older people’s views on how to keep going during the coronavirus period? You are invited to have a look at the *invisible talents*’ website for the interviews and photos: www.invisible-talents.eu/links/

Staying at home for the elderly (Austria)

- **AIM:** Making interests, ideas and talents visible in a time of increased ‘invisibility’ because of the coronavirus lockdown; counteract the image of ‘vulnerable’ high-risk group
- **STAFF AND OLDER PEOPLE INVOLVED:** As of today, 11 people from different organisations and community contexts contributed videos.

When the coronavirus lockdown slowed down or even stopped every kind of public life and joint activities in Austria and beyond, the visibility of older people was restricted to the image of a ‘vulnerable’ high-risk group deserving protection from the rest of the population. To counteract this image and other ageist stereotypes, the Austrian partner *queraum* started the video series *Staying at home for the elderly* (*Daheimbleiben für Fortgeschrittene*, in German only). In the meantime, the video series was renamed in *Staying active for the elderly* (*Aktivbleiben für Fortgeschrittene*). In the videos, senior citizens show their love for life and great sense of humour as well as many creative and distracting ways to spend good times (at home).

queraum cooperated with different organisations to inform older people about this campaign. The series was published on YouTube and promoted via various channels (e.g. Facebook, newsletters, websites).

Link: *Aktivbleiben für Fortgeschrittene* on YouTube: www.youtube.com/channel/UCkeL8TO3faiyhP0yJE5YTHQ?view_as=subscriber

Nijolė V. (72), Rector of *Kaunas University of the Third Age*. Long-serving VMU professor in the Social Science department. She is an educator, editor and author of several books, including *Social gerontology: origins and perspectives* and implementer of many social projects. Her positive worldview makes the impossible possible.



Video Kaunas University of the Third Age: Self-realisation, creativity and wisdom (Lithuania)

- **AIM:** To make the activities of the *Kaunas University of the Third Age* more visible
- **STAFF AND OLDER PEOPLE INVOLVED:** 10 people (age range 50-85)

Teachers and students of the *Kaunas U3A* were invited to participate in a filming session. Before the session, the participants agreed on the time, made themselves familiar with the interview guidelines, the other participants and the venue. The title of the video was discussed with the participants. Four of them were interviewed. They were asked about *U3A* and what it meant to them

personally. After the interviews, some shots were taken at other buildings of the university.

It was a wonderful experience to bring the participants together and learn from them in their own words what this institution and the joint work and studies there meant to them. The video raises awareness on the importance of adult education in older age and invites others to join *U3A*.

Link: The video can be found here: www.invisible-talents.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/The%20University%20of%20the%20Third%20Age.mp4

Intergenerational e-book The epidemic stopping the world (Italy)

□ **AIM:** To make a valuable contribution to a society in crisis and to bring younger and older people together (remotely) for a joint project

□ **STAFF AND OLDER PEOPLE INVOLVED:** 39

The Italian team of *Lunaria* wanted to bring young and old people together to make a valuable comment and contribution to the Covid-19 crisis and to share and spread their knowledge, talents and ideas. Together with 39 young, old and very old researchers, journalists and civil society activists,

they produced the e-book *L'epidemia che ferma il mondo - Economia e società al tempo del coronavirus* about the consequences of the pandemic for various fields (e.g. health, labour, economy). With this book they wanted to turn the crisis into opportunities and show and share the collective wisdom of the contributors of all ages.

Link: Please find the publication on the *Lunaria* website: www.lunaria.org/lepidemia-che-ferma-il-mondo-lebook-di-sbilanciamoci/

'Needs and Pleasures' Workshop (Germany)

□ **AIM:** The organisation - a senior's meeting place - wanted to find out about the abilities, talents and interests of their visitors to support in them putting these strengths into practice (again). In this way, the organisation wanted to develop new activities and offers based on these interests and talents.

□ **STAFF AND OLDER PEOPLE INVOLVED:** Approximately 25 people (age range 55-91)

The workshop took place at the *Women's Breakfast*, an activity at a seniors' meeting place in the town of Neu-Isenburg. Participants were divided into groups, where they talked about their talents, interests and abilities. To stimulate the discussions, the *ISIS* team

asked participants about their past, their present and what they would like to do in the future. They wrote down the activities on different coloured cards (past, present, future). The moderator pinned the cards to the board and addressed people directly, asking them, for example, if they were interested in doing any of the activities on the cards. The moderator tried to stimulate team-building processes in order to strengthen and concretise the ideas brought forward by the participants.

This method promotes self-reflection on the one hand and exchanges between participants on the other. Memories are awakened, ideas are exchanged, common ground is found, new things are discovered and joint activities are planned.

“I can sell very well. I was told I could sell refrigerators even in Greenland.”

Hannelore H. (83) is a committed co-founder of the world shop in Neu-Isenburg, Germany. She has been selling fair trade products there as a volunteer for more than ten years. Among them are those whose sales support social projects, such as the *Fundación Delfino del Angel Melo A.C.* in Mexico. There, the T-shirts made of 100% cotton are hand-embroidered by indigenous women. Hannelore H. likes to exchange ideas with people, she is very active and takes part in events of different initiatives in her living environment. Her desire to be 20 years younger expresses the satisfaction she feels and radiates in her life.



invisible talents

thematic corner (Austria)

- **AIM:** *invisible talents* thematic corner (Austria)
- **STAFF AND OLDER PEOPLE INVOLVED:** People of all age groups participated in a health promotion day in a community and visited the thematic corner.

The *Health Promotion Agency Carinthia* included the issue of *invisible talents* in their event format for communities. At a mobile thematic corner, community representatives and citizens are invited to learn more about the *invisible talents* approach, reflect on the situation of older and very old people in their communities and to be inspired by the best practice examples. The *queraum* team supported the *Health Promotion Agency Carinthia* in developing a format, which can be easily adapted to different events and settings.

Interactive methods support active participation: People are, for example, invited to contribute to the ‘talents map’ their favourite locations, organisations and offers in their communities that inspire and invite them to bring in their talents. This method is very helpful for revealing the potentials of a community and for stimulating exchange and networking.

Resources: *invisible talents* Toolbox on www.invisible-talents.eu/outcomes/

Talking about talents with people 80+ (Netherlands)

“I make lots of things for others. In different colours and materials. For example, I make all kinds of coloured sheets for my family. It makes them happy.” *Participant in the Netherlands*

□ **AIM:** To answer questions such as: What talents do older people (80+) have?, What is the value of talking about talents for people 80+? , What do professionals need to become aware of the value of a conversation about talents with people 80+ and to do it more often?

□ **STAFF AND OLDER PEOPLE**

INVOLVED: 11 people (aged 25-80+)

This activity - student research - took place in the municipality of Dalfsen. The participants were staff members of a welfare organisation (*Saamwelzijn Dalfsen*) and older people. The semi-structured interviews (2 per person) were carried out with seven participants 80+. The first interview was about talents. At the second interview, participants were asked to reflect on the value of talking about their talents. The participants were interviewed at home. In addition, four professionals were interviewed about how they engage with people 80+ and how their talents become visible. In a second interview, the professionals were

asked to reflect on what they need to engage in a conversation about talents more often. We observed that interviews contribute not only to self-discoveries and insights, but that the activity itself creates a good feeling and the urge to act. From the professionals we learned that they have enough little time and would like a set of inspirational questions that fit into their daily routines.

Resources: Sybrit van den Berg, Applied Social Gerontology (BA thesis), Participant *invisible talents* student research project ‘Talking about talents with people 80+’

“Older persons should have greater visibility because we will become more and for the quality of the results we have accomplished in our lives.”

Giovanni Battista Z. president of the FREE (Renewable energy sources and energy efficiency). As a former professor at *Politecnico die Milano*, he currently teaches at *Rome La Sapienza University* and at *Milan Technical University Master RIDEF*. He is a member of the *Italian Energy Economists Association* and of the *Italian Green Economy Council*. Author of numerous energy and environmental essays and books, he is a member of the scientific committee of *Economics and Policy of Energy and the Environment*.



‘My ecological footprint’ Workshop (Italy)

“I’ll show my grandchildren how to take the ecological footprint questionnaire, it will help them become aware of their invisible talents!” *Participant in Italy*

- **AIM:** To learn about the ecological footprint and to identify the talents and knowledge older people could contribute to their families to make them live in a more environmentally friendly way.
- **STAFF AND OLDER PEOPLE INVOLVED:** 12 people (age range 55-85)

After introducing the concept of a sustainable lifestyle and a general discussion about healthy environments, the participants filled in the online questionnaire to calculate their ecological footprints. After each question there was a short discussion about the specific topic. In the plenary discussion, participants shared their ideas on how to reduce the ecological footprint and how they could encourage their families and others follow their example, e.g. reduce food waste (by trying new recipes), buy only seasonal vegetables and fruit (and use/prepare them in traditional ways) or spend more time with others (and less with electronic media).

We saw that even a discussion about a topic that might seem far from the primary issue of our project stimulates the production of ideas and talents.

‘Promoting strategic thinking’ Workshops (Lithuania)

- **AIM:** We wanted to motivate and encourage staff members working with the target group to plan activities for the increased visibility of old people.
- **STAFF AND OLDER PEOPLE INVOLVED:** 42 people

The staff of *Kaunas House of Generations* and the staff of the public facility *Kaunas Panemune Social Care House* and *Kaunas city social services centre* were invited to these workshops. The main objective of these reflection workshops was to help staff members to liberate their imagination and creativity and develop activities that promote the visibility of

the talents and competencies of the clients of *Kaunas House of Generations*. The Lithuanian team used the Mood Board method that stimulates out-of-the-box thinking. To open up the discussion, the invisible online test was used. The staff liked this challenge and reflected on the status quo, possible changes and concrete steps they would have to take to make the organisation more aware of the talents of its elderly clients.

Resources and links: Impressions from the workshops can be found on Facebook. The Mood Board method is described in the *invisible talents* Toolbox. The Toolbox and the *invisible talents* online test can be found on www.invisible-talents.eu

“As a ‘beautiful miller-girl’ I have learned that even in older age we are beautiful”.

Ida R. about her role in the play ‘Rumpelstiltskin’. She is an active member of the theatre group organised by the *Midst of Life Group (Catholic Education Service Carinthia, Austria)*. The ladies stage the Brothers Grimm’s fairy tale ‘Rumpelstiltskin’ and enchant young and older audiences with their lovely stage design and their enjoyment of acting.



Questionnaire on 'Needs and Wishes' (Germany)

- **AIM:** The aim of this activity is to find out what visitors or future visitors of a seniors' meeting centre need in order to take advantage of offers. In addition, wishes for new offers can be identified.

To find out about the interests and wishes of visitors and future visitors of a seniors' meeting centre, it was planned to carry out a survey, which the target group of the meeting centre would answer both online and in a regional free magazine. Unfortunately, the project was not carried out due to the coronavirus pandemic. The magazine, *Zeitlos*, which is published three times a year, appeals to older people from the region with its diverse articles and event tips. It is available in pharmacies, town halls, the seniors' meeting centre and the senior citizens' aid centre.

Talents in the Midst of Life Groups (Austria)

- **AIM:** Making talents of older people visible
- **STAFF AND OLDER PEOPLE INVOLVED:** Approximately 80 people (age range 40-93)

The *Midst of Life Groups*, run by the *Catholic Education Service Carinthia*, focus on health prevention based on a combination of memory and physical exercises. However, the group managers also promote social contacts and participants' talents, competencies and interests. In Carinthia, 64 of these groups exist, facilitated by 34 group managers. Participants are between 40 and 96 years old.

According to the approach of the *invisible talents* project, some concrete activities have been realised in order to make the talents of older and very old participants (more) visible:

- The *Catholic Education Service* decided to make use of internal media channels and published an article and professional photos on their *Midst of Life* theatre group (women 80+ staging the Brothers Grimm's fairy tale 'Rumpelstiltskin').
- In addition, the issue of *invisible talents* was picked up in the internal event with the motto "Let's have a look what the others are doing". Group managers and participants heard about activities realised in the *Midst of Life Groups* and in other organisations aiming to promote the interests and talents of participants and make them visible.



‘The EU and the *invisible talents*’ Plenary Sessions and Ball (Italy)

- **AIM:** To inform about the EU project *invisible talents* and to invite older people to bring in their talents to organise a great event.
- **STAFF AND OLDER PEOPLE INVOLVED:** Approximately 68 people (age range 62-85)

The president of the *Via Iberia 7 Elderly Social Centre* in Rome wanted to introduce EU programmes in general and the project *invisible talents* specifically to the centre’s members as there were many questions among them about the EU and its relevance for older citizens. The Italian partner *Lunaria* organised two plenary meetings about EU programmes and the *invisible talents* projects. They stimulated a collective exchange of ideas

and discussions about the talents of the Centre’s members.

As a result of these activities, the centre hosted a ‘Ball for Europe’. This event took place in connection with the *invisible talents* partner meeting in Rome in September 2019. For this occasion, everybody had the opportunity to bring in their talents, e.g. in decorating the ball-room, in preparing the buffet or as dancers. There was an interesting exchange between the Centre’s members and the project partners.

INSPIRATION BEYOND

Examples of best practice from the partner countries

In the course of our project, we came across many interesting and inspiring people and initiatives that reveal the potential of older people:

Altmodisch - a portrait project

In line with the motto “Every fold a story - every photo a whole book” the Austrian photographer Catherine Ebser takes pictures of older women and men. Unimpressed by fashion trends but with a great love for staged photos, the photographer makes the diverse personalities and life stories of her models visible. Have a look at the very inspiring photos on Catherine's website: www.altmodisch.at (German)

Setting role models

The seniors' meeting centre *Haltestelle* (Germany) hosts a photo exhibition with pictures of very old volunteers. The photographs show them in action. For example, a woman is photographed baking a cake, because it is this talent that she brings to the meeting centre. As a result, some visitors of the meeting centre feel encouraged to become volunteers themselves and to contribute their skills and talents.

FitArt all men project - KEARLSschem

A video about a special project of an all-men group, long-term inhabitants of the *St. Willibrord assisted living centre* (Boskamp, Netherlands). The men decide to make something useful for their next door neighbours in the centre and get to work. Assisted by a visual artist and staff they design and construct an unusual screen that gives their neighbours some rest and privacy. The video is accompanied by music and although there are no English subtitles, the images tell the story clearly.

<https://youtu.be/1vKPtH4Mdl4>

www.fitart.nl/projecten/kearlsschem.html

Elderly at Rome Friday-for-Future

In Rome, groups of older people very actively support school kids in the *Fridays-for-climate* demonstrations. For more information (in Italian and English) about the Rome *Fridays-for-climate* organizers have a look at Facebook: www.facebook.com/FFFroma/

Senior citizens gamble - computer games make pensioners a net hit.

The seniors of the YouTube channel have won the YouTube *GOLDEN CAMERA Digital Award* in the category 'Let's Play & Gaming' 2018. www.youtube.com/channel/UCLwZDUuQ7HpVA-QBE9fFdhQ (German only)

Golden Age

Golden Age is a photo calendar project of the *Seniors Clubs Vienna*, Austria. The youngest model is in his/her mid-60s, the oldest 80 years old. The models were styled by a make-up artist and body painter who created a suitable motif for each month. www.kwp.at/content/golden-age-der-wiener-seniorinnen-kalender (German)

People over seventy make theatre debut: a childhood wish comes true

A number of residents of the *De Vijverhof residential care centre* (Netherlands) made their theatre debut with the performance *Long and Happy* at the *Isala theatre* (Capelle a/d IJssel, January 2020). One of the characters is 77-year-old Yvonne Hammendorp-Bergman. For her, a childhood wish comes true: "I have always wanted to be in the theatre, but my education made it impossible to do so. Now my dream has come true."

https://rtvr.nl/_JI4

The video shows how much the actors enjoy the rehearsal (Dutch only).

Rollator as a dancing partner

In this video participants of a rollator dancing class talk about the positive effects of their hobby: www.youtube.com/watch?v=_dyle8zJeD4 (German only)

INITIATIVES in times of Covid-19



The Haltestelle seniors' meeting centre goes online

The meeting centre has opened a video channel on vimeo. Since the centre's many activities cannot be visited at the moment, they are brought into the living room via the video portal. It is planned that there will be a video clip for each project offered by *Haltestelle*.

<https://vimeo.com/haltestelle>

WE & corona (WIJ & corona)

How are Dutch seniors dealing with the coronavirus crisis? How do Dutch seniors experience the corona crisis? How has their life changed, what are they worried about, what gives them hope and comfort, how do they spend the day? Under the name *Wij & corona*, initiators *Leyden Academy on Vitality and Aging* and the *GetOud Foundation* provide a platform for seniors to tell their stories and inspire each other.

www.wijencorona.nl (in Dutch only)

Singing seniors

Residents of a nursing home in Jena don't want to miss their daily singing. So, they meet in the hallway in front of their doors and sing together. Another resident accompanies the singers on the keyboard. Enjoy listening and watching: www.youtube.com/watch?v=bwi_R916un0 (in German only)

FaltenrockFM

How to keep a cool head in difficult times? Older people share recommendations on how to make time spent at home more productive.

FaltenrockFM: www.facebook.com/pg/faltenrockfm/community/ (podcast in German only)

Nonna's suggestions on Coronavirus

(Italian with subtitles in English):

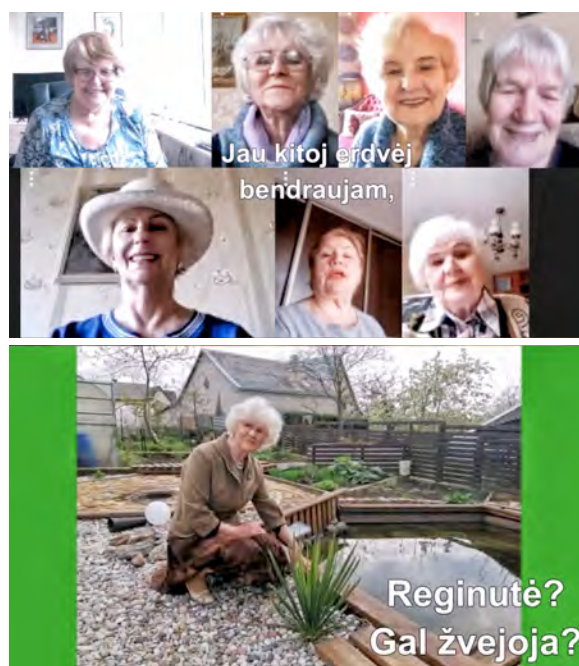
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ey08XMOisw

Telebakkie! Coffee hour by telephone

Many single elderly people had their weekly coffee hour, their daytime activities or other pleasant gatherings until Corona came. There you are, alone in your home. Fortunately, there is now *Telebakkie!* Fun, simple and effective. *Telebakkie!* is a telephone coffee hour for max. six people (Rotterdam). *Telebakkie!* has been tested together with residents of the *Mazesteyn residential complex* in the Esch district of Rotterdam. All you need is one initiator with a smartphone, other participants can use a regular telephone if they do not own a smartphone. And very important: a cup of coffee with some sweets close at hand. <https://youtu.be/mPZR31AODbw> (Dutch only)

Kaunas University of the Third Age, Rubric Collage of thoughts

Kaunas University of the Third Age (Kaunas U3A) had to change plans for implementing an academic year due to coronavirus. In order to maintain relations between members of *Kaunas U3A*, the rubric *Collage of thoughts* was introduced on the Facebook page of *Kaunas U3A*. Community members were invited to share their ideas concerning: What *U3A* means for you? Since April 2020 several announcements have been posted almost every day. Before Covid-19, Facebook was mainly used for sharing information about *U3A* activities. However, Facebook is now used as a place for communication and meetings. Leaders of *Kaunas U3A* presented virtual reviews of the academic year 2019-2020, members share their thoughts and photos about their everyday life. As the *Faculty of Theatre and Music* is not able to give their annual live performance, they also created several videos and presented them on Facebook. The latest video *Reginutė? Gal žvejoja?* (*Reginute? Maybe fishing?*) was presented as a virtual performance. All video and posts are available on the Facebook page of *Kaunas U3A*: www.facebook.com/TAUKAUNAS/



translation: "We communicate in another space already.", "Reginutė? Maybe fishing?"

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- CATHOLIC EDUCATION SERVICE
CARINTHIA, MIDST OF LIFE GROUPS
- HEALTH PROMOTION AGENCY
CARINTHIA
- ASSOCIATION DORFSERVICE

In Germany

- SENIOR CITIZENS' ADVICE CENTRE
MAINTAL
- RED CROSS NURSING HOME
KLEEBLATT MAINTAL-BISCHOFSSHEIM
- MEETING AND ADVICE CENTRE FOR
SENIOR CITIZENS HALTESTELLE
LANGEN
- SENIOR CITIZENS' OFFICE
WINKELSMÜHLE DREIEICH
- DISTRICT ADVICE CENTRE AND
MEETING PLACE QUARTIER IV NEU-
ISENBURG
- DISTRICT ADVICE CENTRE AND
MEETING PLACE FREIHERR-VOM-
STEIN STRASSE NEU-ISENBURG

In Italy

- ROME VIA IBERIA 71 AND FABIO DI
LORENZO ELDERLY SOCIAL CENTRES.
- THE SBILANCIAMOCI! CAMPAIGN.
- LEGAMBIENTE
- WWF ITALY

In Lithuania

- KAUNAS HOUSE OF GENERATIONS
- PUBLIC HOUSE OF KAUNAS
PANEMUNE SOCIAL CARE HOUSE
- KAUNAS CITY SOCIAL SERVICES
CENTER
- KAUNAS UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD
AGE

In the Netherlands

- MODESTRAAT/CARO BONINK,
PARTICIPANTS
- DREAM FACTORY, SWEET 70
- STUDENTS HOGESCHOOL
WINDESHEIM
- STUDENTS HOGESCHOOL FONTYS

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