

PORTBRANTS

Project Stories from the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme
Demographic Change and Knowledge Development



EUROPEAN UNION
EUROPEAN REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT FUND

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Editorial Support: Tom Popper
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Editorial

Regions facing difficulties in development are often impacted by population loss, brain drain and, consequently, economic and social problems. In many cases, these problems are linked to economic decline and structural changes, such as the cessation of traditional industries. These changes encourage young people to move toward urban centres, which means that more remote regions are losing know-how, educated workers and their future potential.

CENTRAL EUROPE projects such as YURA (p.46) help making shrinking regions more attractive by adapting services to actual needs of younger generations. They also contribute to increasing the attractiveness and accessibility of shrinking cities and regions like QUALIST (p.32) or WOMEN (p.44). Projects like ET-struct (p.22) help to match vocational training with business needs.

Regions in central Europe are furthermore facing an ageing society as a consequence of low birth rates and migration of younger people. The relative number of wage earners is decreasing while demands for improved social services and accessible infrastructure increase. In response, CENTRAL EUROPE projects like Senior Capital (p.38) or HELPS (p.26)

support active ageing through improvement of the lifestyle of the elderly and valorising competences of the 50+ generation.

This booklet introduces you to the CENTRAL EUROPE story, showcasing 16 demographic change and knowledge development projects that were co-financed since 2007. We hope that it will serve as a valuable starting point for discussing achievements of our projects and that it will inspire you on what can be done further and what directions should be taken in the programming period 2014-2020.



Christiane Breznik,
City of Vienna,
CENTRAL EUROPE
Managing Authority

CENTRAL EUROPE

Cooperating across borders for the regions

The cities and rural regions of central Europe share a common history as well as similar social and cultural characteristics. The area covers more than one million square kilometres, stretching from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Mediterranean Sea in the south, with less clearly defined borders to the west and east. It is home to 150 million people – benefitting from transnational cooperation through the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme since 2007.

Despite their common characteristics, the regions of central Europe are marked by diverse features: Major differences are apparent in terms of climate conditions, land use, settlement and economic structures, accessibility, and ecological challenges. There are also big differences in central Europe's political and administrative structures, which are among the most heterogeneous in the European Union. The challenge is to use central Europe's diversity as an opportunity to promote more sustainable development of the area – by fostering increased cooperation among a wide range of actors from various countries and regions.

CENTRAL EUROPE 2007-2013

The CENTRAL EUROPE Programme has generated ample opportunities for closer cooperation among public authorities, institutions and private businesses from nine central European countries: Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine. By co-financing 124 projects, the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme has helped to improve local and regional innovation, to increase accessibility, to preserve the environment and to

enhance the competitiveness and attractiveness of regions within central Europe.

Since 2007 the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme has invested more than EUR 230 million on transnational projects supporting:

-  Technology transfer and business innovation
-  Sustainable public transport and logistics
-  Environmental risk management and climate change
-  Energy efficiency and renewable energies
-  Demographic change and knowledge development
-  Cultural heritage and creative resources

Programme: CENTRAL EUROPE

ERDF funding: € 231 million

Duration: 2007 - 2013 (2015)

Website: www.central2013.eu

498 000 000

Euros of investment being prepared by CENTRAL EUROPE projects

22

Euro cents spent per citizen per year on financing CENTRAL EUROPE projects

1 331

Partners involved in CENTRAL EUROPE projects

Cooperating for citizens

CENTRAL EUROPE projects all involve joint efforts by stakeholders from different countries. This approach is designed to improve people's day-to-day lives by addressing problems that do not necessarily recognise national borders. Issues have been tackled at the territorial level where they occur, which is the regions in central Europe. Transnational cooperation allows partners to take advantage of the added value of doing things together, so they can prevent duplication and speed up developments with a higher impact.

More concretely, CENTRAL EUROPE projects:

- ▶ Carry out pilot investments and actions
- ▶ Leverage additional money and investment
- ▶ Come up with new economic strategies and involve local communities
- ▶ Increase efficiency on various levels
- ▶ Improve spending of public money
- ▶ Support the adaptation of EU directives to regional contexts
- ▶ Strengthen regional networks and involve local communities
- ▶ Influence the policy agenda on all political levels

“ We need to build on the rich and valuable experience gathered through transnational cooperation. There is much evidence that a series of challenges cannot be tackled solely at the level of a single Member State, or even at regional level, but only in a cross-border context. ”

Johannes Hahn,
European Commissioner for Regional Policy

Contributing to Europe 2020

Transnational cooperation driven by the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme is firmly embedded in the strategic policy frameworks on the European, national and regional levels. Many of CENTRAL EUROPE's projects have already been contributing to the Europe 2020 Strategy and its mutually reinforcing goals of smart, inclusive and sustainable growth in Europe. This approach to development is expected to help the EU and Member States deliver high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. Concrete actions of the 2020 Strategy are designed to reach ambitious targets in five areas: employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate and energy. The CENTRAL EUROPE Programme, and the transnational cooperation between actors on the ground, plays an important role in meeting these targets on the regional level – even though the programme only used 0.07 percent of the total budget available for EU Cohesion Policy in 2007-2013.

CENTRAL EUROPE 2014-2020

In the programming period 2014-2020 the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme will continue to support regional cooperation among central European countries. Croatia is the latest country to join the programme, which also includes Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, as well as parts of Germany and Italy.

The overall objective of the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme is “to cooperate beyond borders to make central European



cities and regions better places to live and work”. Put more precisely, transnational cooperation should become the catalyst for implementing smart solutions that answer to regional challenges in the fields of:

- Innovation and knowledge development
- Low carbon cities and regions
- Environmental resources
- Cultural resources
- Transport and mobility

Topics like demographic change will be tackled horizontally. The focus of activities will be on policy-learning and implementation-oriented approaches at the transnational level. More concretely, actions will include the development and implementation of strategies and action plans, the development, testing and implementation of tools, the preparation of larger investment, the implementation of pilot actions – including pilot investments – as well as capacity building measures including training.

More detailed information on the new CENTRAL EUROPE Programme is available online at www.central2020.eu

COOPERATING ON DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE 2007-2013

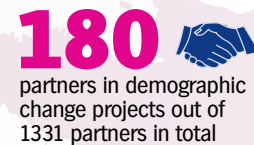


CENTRAL EUROPE AT A GLANCE

COUNTRIES, REGIONS/CITIES, AND INHABITANTS COVERED



DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE PROJECTS CO-FINANCED



DURATION OF PROGRAMME

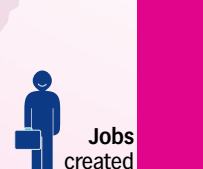
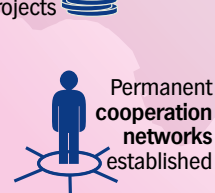
2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
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PUBLIC MONEY WELL INVESTED

BUDGET INVESTED



With roughly **0.03€** spent per citizen per year, the programme achieves:



CONTRIBUTING TO EUROPE 2020

CENTRAL EUROPE contributes to the European Union 2020 Strategy and reaching its goals of smart, inclusive and sustainable growth. Concrete targets for employment, innovation, education, social inclusion as well as climate change and energy were set on the European level and CENTRAL EUROPE project results help to meet them on the local and regional levels.

1 European platform against poverty

1 Digital agenda

1 Innovation Union

1 Youth on the move

2 Industrial policy for globalisation

14 Agenda for new skills and jobs

5 Resource efficient Europe



Number of project contributions to EU 2020 priorities



Number of project contributions to EU 2020 flagship initiatives

ANALYSIS

Cooperating to build regional knowledge amid demographic shifts

In many regions of central Europe, the population is getting smaller, older and less skilled, as educated young people flee rural areas and head for urban centres. For these regions, the current demographic trends mean that essential knowledge and human capital is becoming scarcer. Many projects within the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme seek to prevent this kind of brain drain – by encouraging educated young people to stay in their hometowns and by making sure that the knowledge of elderly and disadvantaged groups is more fully put to use. An analysis by Bureau PAU found that 16 CENTRAL EUROPE projects that fit in the category of “demographic change and knowledge development” provide immediate benefits for the regions involved, while also promoting longer-term EU goals. The analysis noted that knowledge development, for the beneficiaries and participants, was a cross-cutting theme for all 16 projects surveyed. It also noted that these projects can be broken into two subthemes: projects that aim at young workers and seek to increase the opportunities and appeal of shrinking regions, and projects that aim at senior citizens and seek to improve their economic participation and quality of life.

Different approaches to the problem

Many of the projects sought to improve the knowledge base, so that the skills of residents and local policy incentives meet the needs of businesses – thereby improving employment opportunities for locals while also encouraging businesses to stay. Several of these types of initiatives included training for the local workforce. Others undertook measures, such as testing new policies, to improve the climate for creative industries, especially those industries involved in information and communication technology and environmental innovations. Another group of projects sought to maintain the existing knowledge base of shrinking regions with improvements to social services, health care, housing or transportation – so that the educated young workers who are vital to development will want to stay around. Along with seeking to keep younger residents in their home districts, it is also important to address the needs of the comparatively older populations who are left behind in shrinking regions. Many of the CENTRAL EUROPE projects addressing this area seek to valorise the human capital of the older population, the analysis notes. The experience of elderly residents can be put to work, to help local economies and to improve the quality of life of the elderly. Other projects seek to ensure that older residents’ needs are met through senior housing and telemedicine solutions.

On the basis of our analysis it can be concluded that the projects funded within the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme clearly present a wide range of relevant topics in relation to demographic change and knowledge development and offer great potential for future actions in relation to Europe 2020 goals.

Bureau PAU, Netherlands

Immediate and lasting benefits

According to Bureau PAU, the immediate benefits of these projects include strategies that help regions address the challenge of demographic change and knowledge development, as well as pilot initiatives that assist regions while demonstrating best practices. The long term benefits include the establishment of transnational networks, a benefit that is common to projects throughout the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme. Many of the projects addressing demographics and knowledge development sought to establish regional knowledge systems, which unite relevant information about education, economy and policy into one place. These types of networks are especially effective and long-lasting, the analysis said. While it acknowledged that the regions of central Europe are diverse, the analysis also noted that they share many similarities, so that it makes sense for these regions to test and share common solutions. The analysis points out that transnational initiatives are a good way to maintain the results of these efforts beyond the life of the projects. Viewed from the broader European perspective, the Bureau PAU analysis found that CENTRAL EUROPE projects involving demographic change and knowledge development helped to forward many of the EU 2020 priorities, including social inclusion, innovation and sustainable growth. Given the value of these projects on the regional, transnational and Europe-wide levels, Bureau PAU recommended a continuation of projects addressing demographic change and knowledge development in the coming funding cycle.

To download the complete analysis visit <http://www.central2013.eu/thematic-studies>

Demographic change and knowledge development



Cooperating to preserve the regions'
most precious resource: people

Cooperating to integrate aged
and disadvantaged citizens

PROJECT STORIES



Better governance to reduce costs

Dramatic demographic change poses challenges to authorities in central Europe. As populations in some regions become smaller, older and more diverse, the tax base is reduced, yet local and regional governments still need to alter services – ranging from school buses to health care for seniors. ADAPT2DC supports innovative solutions to maintain public services in the face of shrinking populations.

Is it possible to finance a primary school if only five pupils remain? How far can people travel to the next hospital in case of emergency? Is it enough if the bus only stops twice a day in your village? How are elderly people affected when the last shop in the neighborhood closes down? These and other questions become relevant in central Europe as more young people move out of small towns, leaving their communities with an ageing population. This demographic trend creates changing demands and declining public funds for the provision of public services and infrastructure.

A dialogue about appropriate solutions

Because ageing societies pose challenges for many regions in central Europe, it is important to enter into a dialogue about appropriate solutions. The ADAPT2DC project seeks to provide a platform for such a dialogue, and to identify transferable approaches that will become part of a common strategy for dealing with these problems. The project does not aim to stop demographic change but instead seeks to adapt to what is apparently an irreversible process. It focuses on giving shrinking regions and cities in central Europe

ADAPT2DC showed us how to distribute daycare nurseries rationally. If children are forced to leave their rural hometown regularly from a young age, they will be less likely to choose that settlement as an adult. Appropriate childcare facilities are thus one way to counter depopulation tendencies.

Zsuzsa Mester,
Hungarian Authority of Social Affairs
and Child Protection

cost-effective options for social and technical services and infrastructure – like health care, housing, public transport, social care and water provision. ADAPT2DC helps cities and regions to deal with demographic change by developing sustainable public service solutions and by encouraging the transfer of knowledge between experts on the issue, public partners and investors.

Pilot actions

ADAPT2DC works through pilot actions that address a wide range of infrastructures and test innovative solutions: In Poland telemedical units, which use modern information-communication technology to allow for remote medical monitoring and testing, are distributed to patients to show how early diagnosis can reduce health-care costs. In Hungary, a plan for the decentralized distribution of nurseries within a particular region will help to raise efficiency in childcare services. In the Czech Republic, energy audits aim to reduce energy costs of public buildings and new solutions are being found for vacant buildings. And in Germany, three regions are developing demographic coaching for civil servants, to help teach administrators how to better deal with the needs of ageing, shrinking populations. The experiences gained from these, and other pilot actions within ADAPT2DC will be combined with a scientific analysis of demographic developments and infrastructure spending in central Europe to feed into the final output of the project: A strategy with recommendations for policy makers on how to adapt infrastructures to address demographic change.

12.8

Percentage of population that Thuringia lost in the last 20 years

100

Number of patients who benefit from telemedical equipment within the pilot action in Malopolska

22.9

Percentage of GDP that Slovenia spent on age-related expenditures in 2007. This number is expected to rise another 12.8 percentage points by 2060



Project: ADAPT2DC

ERDF funding: €2 075 678

Duration: 2011 – 2014

Website: www.adapt2dc.eu



Facing the challenges of demographic change

Ageing populations, enhanced migration and changing family structures pose challenges to all of central Europe. Minimising the negative effects of these trends requires cooperation between governments, social partners and other stakeholders. To enhance this cooperation, CE-Ageing Platform developed a strategy that establishes coordinated actions and guidelines for CENTRAL EUROPE regions.

Central European societies are getting older. As fertility rates decline and migration becomes easier, the average age in many regions is increasing significantly, creating new problems for the countries in this part of Europe. Labour force shrinkage during the upcoming decades will bring diverse economic and social challenges in terms of employment, public expenditure on social protection and pensions. Regions need to enhance the employability of older people by finding ways to maintain their motivation and working capacity while encouraging synergies that utilise workers' skills and experiences, regardless of age. It is also essential

to remove barriers to employing older workers, by adapting working conditions that meet the needs of an age-diverse workforce and by tackling age discrimination and negative stereotypes of older workers.

Cooperating on a joint strategy

The CE-Ageing Platform brings together 13 organisations from Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Several ministries, vocational training organisations, counselling and research institutions,

Photo: © CE-Ageing Platform

Changes observed in recent years require constant discussion in order to improve the living conditions of older citizens. There is a need to work on acceptance of the seniors' world and to use the potential and experience of people of all ages.

Mirośław Sekuła, former Member of Polish Parliament, former President of Poland's Supreme Chamber of Control, former Deputy Minister of Finance and current Marshal of Silesia, Poland

regional agencies and NGOs shared their knowledge and resources in implementing the project's activities. The project partners and other stakeholders met in three international conferences, which aimed at raising awareness of the challenges of an ageing society, promoting innovative actions to meet the needs of older people, and developing transnational cooperation between trainers, labour market institutions, and small- and medium-sized enterprises. One key result of this cooperation is a joint transnational CE-Ageing Platform strategy, which was prepared in a participatory process and serves as a guideline for regions in responding to the challenges of an ageing society. The strategy contains roughly 200 good-practice examples and defines a vision that is applicable to central Europe in general. It addresses the issue of demographic change by describing existing potential and current challenges, and it contains recommended actions for local and regional public authorities – as well as policy recommendations for all of central Europe.

Pilot initiatives

Along with awareness-raising events, demography workshops, and conferences, nine individual pilot initiatives have undertaken target activities, including:

- Developing two regional ageing strategies
- Developing two training concepts targeting unemployed jobseekers 50+ in Slovakia and rural area's citizens and employees 50+ in the Czech Republic
- Cooperating directly with small- and medium-sized enterprises to develop cross-generational human resource development strategies that contain activities targeting individual needs of older workers
- Addressing work-life-balance and age and diversity management through various projects

50

Percent is the target of the European employment strategy for minimum employment among people aged 55-64

40

International meetings organised by the project consortium in 2011-2013

1 618

Participants actively involved in regional demographic events organised within nine regional pilots

Photo: © CE-Ageing Platform



Project: CE-Ageing Platform

ERDF funding: € 1 721 611

Duration: 2011 – 2013

Website: www.ce-ageing.eu



Photo: © iStockphoto.com / Branko Mikovic

Bringing urban restructuring processes to your door

Urban restructuring efforts are more effective when they involve well-informed homeowners. EPOurban seeks to integrate private owners into housing and urban development strategies, thereby encouraging them to invest in their own buildings and help in making the neighbourhoods more attractive for living. The project offers a transnational system of consulting services, to give owners knowledge on a range of topics that can impact investment decisions.

The aim of the EPOurban project is to give property owners the information they need to undertake renovations. This knowledge can get homeowners more involved in the planning process and generate private investment in the building stock. The EPOurban effort unifies diverse cities from Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Urban restructuring is an important topic throughout the EU, but previous attempts to address the issue have tended to ignore property owners. Individual owners need information on construction and financing so that they can develop

their property. If homeowners do not possess the capacity for action, their neighbourhoods will remain underdeveloped and uninteresting for larger private investors. Owners need even more support in choosing to improve their property when a building is involved in complicated ownership structures or its location is problematic – for instance it is far from mainlines or in an unstable neighbourhood. The EPOurban project works to solve these problems by integrating private owners of residential buildings into overall revitalisation strategies. These strategies will be far more effective with the involvement of homeowners.

Consultations help to push the ability of private owners to learn more about their residential building and what to do for its development. Thereby they provide a positive impulse into the local housing market. With EPOurban we are using the chance to establish transferable local consultation systems which could be adapted by other municipalities.

Carsten Gerkens, Head of Office for Urban Regeneration and Residential Development of City of Leipzig, Germany

A network of consultants

During the project, a transnational network of consultants provided information to municipalities, housing market professionals, private owners and other interested parties. Each project partner consulted with up to 15 clients in their target areas per consultation phase. After the consultation phase, beneficiaries of the programme attended the “EPOurban Academy”. The academy is a conference that brings together expert consultants, public experts, private owners and policy makers – to speak about consultation experiences and to promote the integration of private owners in urban renewal processes. Each consultation with a property owner results in a “ready to use” action plan that provides the knowledge they need to undertake development in their property.

Sustainable results

Based on the results of consultations, EPOurban creates an effective learning tool that helps integrate private owners of residential buildings into overall housing and urban development strategies. The results are also used to generate guidelines, so other municipalities can develop their own local consultation system. To ensure the results are used after the project ends the lessons that can be adapted and transferred to other countries in central Europe are documented in a “best practice” handbook. They will be used to design consulting systems that keep private owners involved in planning while making it easier for them to undertake property improvements.

7 Cities where the new consultation system is developed

227 Consultants active in the transnational system established by EPOurban

103 Pilot cases consulted by EPOurban in the first consultation phase

Photo: © EPOurban



Project: EPOurban
ERDF funding: € 1 666 910
Duration: 2011 – 2014
Website: www.epourban.eu



Matching skills and jobs for high employment

The global financial crisis of 2008 left Europe facing widespread uncertainty as unemployment surged. To combat this challenge, we need a better understanding of the types of skills today's market requires, along with training that helps workers obtain those skills. ET-struct helps central Europeans to predict new labour market conditions and qualify their work forces for regional demands.

Regional businesses need to cope with ever-changing conditions and pressures. For their part, workers need support so they can protect their own economic security while helping to keep their regional economy healthy and relevant. The ET-struct project is a cooperative effort between regions in Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Poland, Slovenia and Ukraine – all of which are seeking to help workers match their economies' needs, as a way of encouraging stability and growth. Numerous national and international studies show that the qualifications of the local work force do not sufficiently

match the needs of regional economies. This situation hinders economic growth, competitiveness, and employment. As one study notes, the problem is an inadequate "connection of the educational system to the leading edge of technology and business practices".

Determining needs, offering the right training

To overcome this problem, ET-struct seeks to incorporate three key factors – regional politics, the regional economy and regional education – into "regional management

triangles". Several steps were taken to set up these triangles. In order to match and optimise work-force qualification with the needs of regional economies, the project began with the development of an innovative, dynamic, flexible and systematic model called "ET-Inventory", designed to predict employment needs. Using this model, surveys were conducted in the 10 partner regions, to determine what skills employers are looking for and to give investors insights into the economies of those regions.

Based on the analysis of regional demands, an e-learning platform called "ET-LearnTrain" was developed and tested to offer online and on-site training for regional work forces in the ET-struct regions. The 24 training modules that were developed cover a wide spectrum of subjects, such as entrepreneurship, ICT support, social skills, intercultural communication skills, vocational orientation and technical training. The experiences and lessons learned in implementing the "ET-LearnTrain" platform are documented in a management handbook called "ET-Academy", which can be a useful tool for others in Europe who want to address structural changes in employment.

After identifying labour needs, and offering appropriate training, the project sought to encourage a continuation of the process with "regional management triangles". These are bodies that coordinate the process, so that regional labour needs and labour skills will stay in sync with one another in the future. The project also produced a document called "ET Management", which offers other European regions a blueprint for creating their own "management triangles".

Skills development is emerging as a key variable for economic and employment development of the Veneto region. ET-struct represented the opportunity to ensure a close relationship between business, policy and decision makers and the training system.

Piero Monestier, Coordinator of the Training Area, Certottica s.c.a.r.l, Longarone (Belluno,) Italy

24

Training modules produced by ET-struct

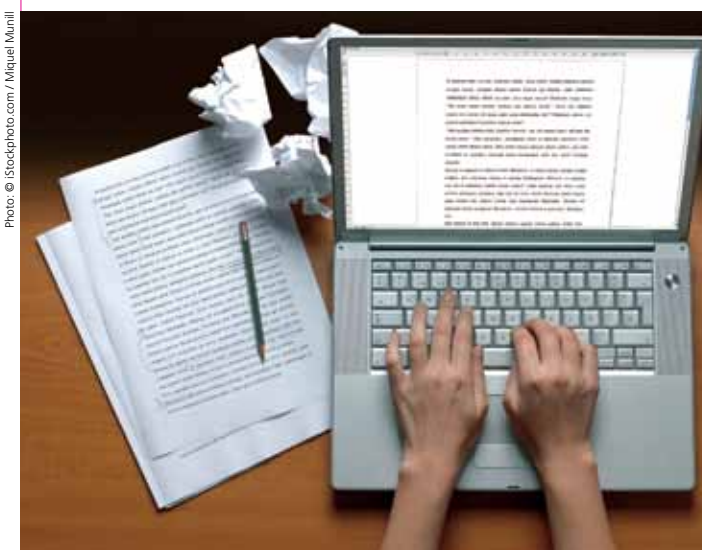
517

Citizens trained using the modules

10

"Regional management triangles" helping ensure that skills and employment needs continue to match

Photo: © iStockphoto.com / Miguel Murillo



Project: ET-struct

ERDF funding: €2 058 635

Duration: 2010 – 2012

Website: www.etstruct.eu



Network secures the viability of ageing rural regions

In many rural regions of central Europe, the population has decreased while the average age has increased – demographic trends that require an urgent policy response. The EURUFU project seeks to identify and promote the best approaches already being used in Europe to adapt the economy, education, health care and social services to address these changes in regional populations.

As Europe's population continues to become older and less numerous, regions will face the challenge of maintaining basic services while still aspiring to economic growth. These demographic trends are expected to continue over the coming decades, and will be especially difficult for rural regions. That is why several such regions from central Europe joined together in the EURUFU project. Through research to identify and analyse best practices, EURUFU seeks to find ways for regions to attract investors, maintain their population and address key needs in the fields of health and social services, education, local econo-

my, and labor market and mobility. Through pilot initiatives, the project puts these practices to test. To ensure that the information reaches the right people, the project partners involved a range of various stakeholders from government and business to civil society.

Pilot initiatives

EURUFU's pilots sought to establish means for delivering sustainable public services in the face of reduced revenue. In the German region of Kyffhäuser, was created a training

Photo: © Fotolia

11 The municipality of Mór has always been committed to initiatives focusing on development of rural areas. Our community and the whole region benefited from a EURUFU pilot to examine public transportation, leading to improved public transport in the region. **11**

Péter Fenyvesi,
Mayor of the city of Mór, Hungary

course for mobile medical assistants, who can lighten the doctor's workload by visiting old and immobile patients at home. The pilot also involved a survey to determine how accessible family doctors' practices are via public transport. Another example for a pilot is the village of Grodzanow, a typical rural area of Poland with limited manufacturing, high unemployment and lack of social infrastructure, where EURUFU invested in converting a partly derelict building and adjacent lot into an attractive, multi-purpose, multigenerational community space. The new facility will be used for education, social activities, and sport and recreation. In the Austrian region of Naturpark Zirbitzkogel-Grebenzen, a rural area with a steadily ageing society, EURUFU helps establish a "Region of Competence for Burn-Out- and Stress-Prevention" and realised a new regional event, "Symposium for Burn-Out- and Stress-Prevention". It also included efforts to encourage small- and medium-sized enterprises to operate services aimed at social and health care, as well as prevention of stress and burn-out.

Results for Europe

The results of these pilots will be combined with the information gleaned through the benchmarking analysis to generate transnational strategies that can easily be transferred to other areas. These strategies will recommend common actions for regions in central Europe and beyond: The information generated by the project will provide an in-depth analysis of the situation of Europe's rural cities and regions and raise awareness of the consequences that future demographic trends pose for local public sectors. This should have an impact on EU Cohesion Policy and the review of future EU budgets.

50

Students participated in the EURUFU summer university, involving experts from five universities

17

Pilots implemented by the EURUFU partnership

44

Percentage of central Europeans living in predominantly rural regions according to OECD

Photo: © Rainis-Burg



Project: EURUFU
ERDF funding: € 1 717 018
Duration: 2011 – 2014
Website: www.eurufu.eu



Photo: © Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia

Better homecare improves seniors' quality of life

Innovative housing and homecare solutions can keep elderly and vulnerable citizens out of care institutions, thereby improving their quality of life. Mindful that older citizens make up a growing proportion of central Europe's population, HELPS helps seniors stay active and independent – and stay in their own homes – with initiatives to make cities more accessible while improving home care.

Central Europe's societies are getting older, a continuing demographic trend that requires revolutionary new solutions in health care. HELPS is helping the situation by providing research that uncovers best practices and innovative approaches – and by undertaking pilots to test these ideas. As a greater proportion of its society grows older, central Europe needs to do more to ensure that citizens can continue to enjoy an autonomous and active life, adequate social relationships, tailor-made care services and easy access to decent spaces for daily living. We need to intervene on behalf of the groups exposed to social exclusion, beginning

with older citizens. HELPS promotes development strategies and practices to improve the quality of life of vulnerable groups in urban areas of central Europe, with a special focus on elderly and people with disabilities. HELPS is committed to fostering a transition for older citizens, from institutional care to family-based and community-based alternatives. The project's approach to the issue provides a fresh look at the kind of changes that urban spaces need to make for the future: Becoming more open, accessible, connected and inclusive. The project operates on the understanding that addressing these challenges

HELPS leads to an innovative mixture of different housing solutions. Our co-housing promotes traditional settings, allowing effective sociality and solidarity among residents, combined with advanced domotic technology and needs-centred care services.

Fabio Bonetta, General Manager, ASP ITIS Trieste, Italy

demands innovative approaches and increased interaction between private and public resources. HELPS partners produce both research studies and a series of pilot actions disseminated in eight different countries: Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Each pilot action addresses the issue of social inclusion from a different point of view.

Three types of pilots

While no two pilot actions identical, they can be divided into three basic types:

- New housing solutions: The pilots taking place in Trieste, Italy and Leipzig, Germany explore innovative types of co-habitation, designed to provide a more manageable daily living arrangement within private and public residential buildings.
- New technologies for better care: The pilot initiatives in Hungary, Slovakia and Poland test a broader application of information and communication technology tools, both in providing training for caregivers and in raising awareness among beneficiaries and their families.
- Open access to information: HELPS established a new dedicated information point in Ljubljana, Slovenia, while Brno, the Czech Republic benefitted from a housing needs survey targeting local administrators, and a pilot in Austria undertook a commitment for mutual information exchange to help elderly people remain active and stay socially connected.

All three types of pilots have several key elements in common: An emphasis on community development, needs-centred actions, encouragement of public-private partnerships and a trans-generational approach.

25

Percentage of the EU population over 65 by 2020

40

Innovative housing solutions for the elderly collected by the project

2012

European year of active ageing and solidarity between generations

Photo: © HELPS



Project: HELPS

ERDF funding: €2 133 975

Duration: 2011 – 2014

Website: www.helps-project.eu



Photo © i.e.SMART

Creating young entrepreneurs and new jobs

Since the 2009 economic crisis, central Europe faces poor employment prospects for young people. Meanwhile, there is also a lack of growth in the small- and medium-sized companies (SMEs) that drive economic development. The i.e. SMART project turns these two negatives into a positive as it helps unemployed young people create their own jobs by becoming Europe's next generation of entrepreneurs.

The i.e. SMART initiative has already had a strong impact, inspiring hundreds of young people to step out of their comfort zone and attempt to start their own businesses. This positive development was achieved through a transnational collaboration, which involved project partners from seven different regions as well as international experts. Working together, the project participants developed a common understanding of what entrepreneurship is and how it can best be taught to young people. The project started entrepreneurship centres called SMART Points, where people between the ages of 14-30 received

training aimed at skill development while they were coached through the process of coming up with ideas and turning them into successful businesses. Project partners created a state of the art, interactive 3D SMART Site, a platform that provides trainers and participants with practical tools to assist in generating ideas and developing a business plan. This learning platform enabled SMART Trainers to expand their start-up support beyond the SMART Point centres, so that participating institutions could also offer training in entrepreneurship. Along with giving training, the project brought together aspiring young entrepreneurs with like-minded

“ The positive impact of this project can easily be seen by observing the students. They are engaged, motivated and eager to be part of society. ”

Dr. Hartmut Rösch, Head of Department for Further Education and Start-Up Center, Stuttgart Media University, Germany

individuals in other countries, through the SMART Network, which allows participants to collaborate and expand their ideas beyond international borders.

Focus on generating ideas

Focusing heavily on idea generation, i.e. SMART fulfils the need for more creativity and innovation in three areas which have proven to be resilient, even during the most recent economic crisis: Information and communication technology, the green economy and creative industries. The project held a SMART Competition, which drew hundreds of young applicants. The five contestants presenting the best business ideas in each of the seven regions participating in the i.e. SMART project were given the opportunity to attend the SMART Campus, where they received personal coaching in entrepreneurship and had the chance to pitch their business ideas to potential investors.

Changing the mainstream curriculum

The i.e. SMART project identified the need for entrepreneurial education to become an integral part of the mainstream curriculum, from secondary school all the way through university and beyond. Thanks to i.e. SMART transnational efforts to develop young entrepreneurs across central Europe, educational systems have begun to look at how entrepreneurial thinking is interdisciplinary and can be embedded in mainstream instruction. This approach means that the gains made by i.e. SMART are expected to continue after the life of the project, and the effort is likely to impact educational reform. Many partners in the project have already committed themselves to entrepreneurship education in their region, by seeking to continue the SMART Site training platform and by further developing the i.e. SMART Programme.

99
Percentage of European businesses that are SMEs

3
Industries with strong potential for economic success among SMEs: the green economy, ICT and creative industries

5
Business ideas developed by young entrepreneurs from each of the seven regions, which were presented to potential investors after the entrepreneurs received coaching

Photo © i.e.SMART



Project: i.e. SMART
ERDF funding: € 1 675 165
Duration: 2012 – 2014
Website: www.ie-smart.eu



Photo: © lassdesign - Fotolia.com

High-potential workers keep firms competitive

Economic development in Europe is increasingly dependent on innovation and high-tech industries, and therefore also on the potential of human resources. That is why regions in Europe have become involved in a "demographic race" for well-trained employees. IDEA is helping those regions that have experienced brain drain with new joint transnational approaches for increasing human capital.

The skill set that companies require from young job applicants and researchers has become more complex in recent years. The approach of the IDEA project is to address this problem by testing different ways to support the kind of networking that can improve supply-demand alignment in the employment market. The project does this by encouraging action from both sides: Sensitising educational institutions to the needs of companies and making companies more open to supporting training programmes. The project gives a special focus to working with small- and medium-sized enterprises, which are often the drivers of

innovation but also often have limited funds for personnel development. The types of industries on which the project focuses include fields where future demand is anticipated: Manufacturing, energy and resource management and information and communication technology. As for types of training, the project targets occupational orientation for job-starters, undergraduate education and further education for employees. The project applied measures and instruments that were tested in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, Italy, Austria and Germany. These instruments offer

“ The geocaching implemented as a pilot action within the IDEA project gave us the opportunity to get in touch with prospective students and to inspire them to start a career in our company. ”

Jette Fichtner, Marketing Manager, AMS Gesellschaft für angewandte Mess- und Systemtechnik mbH, Germany

best practices that are easily transferable to all regions of central Europe.

Improving training to reduce migration

As many regions in central Europe have already learned, the effects of demographic change can be intensified by a mismatch in the supply and demand of workers' abilities. To address this mismatch, employers and educators need to make a concerted effort to synchronise the offerings of advanced vocational training facilities in the region with the actual upcoming demands of local companies. That is why IDEA supports an exchange between businesses and educators that allows discussion of the new requirements for advanced vocational education, as well as the need for companies to create jobs and retain the best workers, even while their business plans are still in an early stage of development.

The results of these discussions are collected and presented in a way that offers students and well-educated workers a better picture of the jobs that are available within their immediate region – giving special attention to regional amenities, locally successful technology fields and the benefits of working for SMEs. By sharing these results, the project helps to encourage workers to stay within their region, thereby preventing the migration that causes brain drain.

Strategy paper summarises recommendations

The IDEA strategy paper collects the experiences of these networking activities in each region and compiles them together, while also offering recommendations for measures and instruments that can be used to foster future knowledge development in the regions of central Europe. The paper focuses on the long-term, offering decision-makers tools to face upcoming demographic changes, which must be addressed in order to maintain the future availability of capable workers.

6.36

Million inhabitants live in the regions participating in IDEA

300 000

Students in IDEA regions prepare for their future career

25

Measures and instruments were tested to find, bind and develop high potential in workers

Photo: © CWE Chemnitz Wirtschaftsförderungs- und Entwicklungsgesellschaft mbH



Project: IDEA

ERDF funding: € 1 658 342

Duration: 2010 – 2013

Website: www.idea-strategy.eu



Small-town living made more enticing

Overcrowding is not a problem everywhere: Some small central European settlements actually fret over their shrinking populations. To stay economically viable, these places must attract workers, consumers and residents. QUALIST helps making small cities more liveable and accessible by promoting benefits of small-town living with techniques that can be replicated all over central Europe.

In the regions of Waldviertel in Austria, Saxony (Vogtland District) in Germany and South Bohemia in the Czech Republic, QUALIST activities addressed population decline in small towns. These regions tried new methods and procedures aimed at improving public transport, revitalising town centers and promoting the idea of staying in – or relocating to – a small town.

The lessons learned in implementing these initiatives are of value to other regions with small towns facing demographic challenges. The activities were undertaken with certain key understandings:

- Mobility must be identified by intelligent, target-oriented concepts
- A more attractive town centre features a wide range of leisure-time activities
- Quality retail and services improve the quality of nearby housing and the living environment

QUALIST initiatives

In Germany and Austria, students from surrounding regions were enticed to study in QUALIST regions with special

“ I was searching for a good place to live, where my two children can grow up in a liveable environment. Thanks to QUALIST I quickly found a suitable house via Wohnweb and even a good job. ”

Martina Noé, Manager, Wirtschaftsforum Waldviertel, Austria

assistance, including recommendations and help in searching for their future job. QUALIST's "Wohnweb 2.0" is an innovative online tool that points out the many advantages of the lifestyle enjoyed by those living in the Austrian region of Waldviertel. In transportation, the project focused on flexible means of transport, including buses on-call or taxis – both good for areas that generate too little traffic for regular service. And when designing mobility centres for South Bohemia and Waldviertel, the project took advantage of the potential to tie projects to nearby cross-border areas. As part of its effort to revitalize town centers in Vogtland, Germany, QUALIST elaborated planning documents that can be used to guide investment projects. QUALIST helped to ensure the completion of feasibility studies and building designs for a multi-generation residential area near the town center of Adorf. The plans call for pleasant surroundings and a wide range of services, to provide a satisfying lifestyle that attracts new residents. Another redevelopment project was planned in the nearby town of Oelsnitz, where QUALIST focused on preparation of studies, concepts and construction plans for a new festival ground. QUALIST also prepared studies and plans for the replacement of a pedestrian bridge in Oelsnitz, to connect the town center with the train station in an attractive way. Additional analyses looked into the possibility of new development in two other small towns in Vogtland, Falkenstein and Elsterberg. In the Czech town of Slavonice, QUALIST elaborated an analysis of the current situation and a list of optional solutions. The project proposed a general development strategy that should serve as the basis for an action plan for the town – and the whole region. Because these initiatives were developed through transnational partnerships, which allow for a broad range of perspectives, the approaches of QUALIST are applicable to many locations. One overall lesson that can be taken from the project is that transnational cooperation is an effective means for addressing demographic challenges – even in smaller, relatively isolated locations.

5 000

Average number of inhabitants in small towns in central Europe

14

Expected increase in percent in the 65+ age group in QUALIST regions by 2025

6

Small towns are more attractive after the implementation of the pre-investment projects of QUALIST



Project: QUALIST
 ERDF funding: € 1 430 545
 Duration: 2010 – 2013
 Website: www.qualist.eu



Photo: © Peter Maszlen - Fotolia.com

Active ageing helps cities handle maturity

Older citizens who remain active are generally happier, healthier and more able to contribute to society. With appropriate input from caring workers and volunteers, cities can do a lot to support active ageing on the local level. Q-AGEING partners facilitated such efforts by conducting a situation analysis, testing pilots and promoting the best solutions via print and web publications.

The growth in Europe's elderly population presents certain challenges and opportunities, though it is more common to hear about the threats of an ageing demography. There is a fear that the ageing of Europe's societies could lead to older generations becoming too heavy a burden on younger, working-age people as the costs of pensions and social services for older people rises. Meanwhile old age is very often associated with illness and dependency, and older people can feel excluded from employment as well as from family and community life. Although some fear that such problems could result in

tensions between different generations, this view neglects the significant contributions that older people can make to society. One key factor for tackling the challenge of demographic ageing and preserving solidarity between generations consists of ensuring that the elderly stay on the labour market longer and remain healthy, active and autonomous after retirement. Cities can initiate a wide range of activities to support active ageing on the local level. Q-AGEING partners tested many different types of actions, from a tailor-made recreation park, to volunteering, to a special 60+ card.

Toolbox

Based on their evaluation of the many initiatives tried out, Q-AGEING partners selected good practices and put them together in a "Toolbox of tested solutions promoting active ageing at the local level". This is a show-case of innovative public services and urban solutions that let communities promote quality ageing. These solutions are spelled out in the toolbox so that they can be adapted by other European municipalities.

The toolbox covers activities addressing four thematic areas:

- Improving social security for the elderly within the community and avoiding isolation
- Developing elderly-friendly public spaces and mobility
- Fostering a senior economy and promoting age management
- Providing better access to lifelong learning and promoting voluntarism for the elderly

One key challenge to achieving any of the activities outlined in the toolbox is to mobilise stakeholders in a way that results in action at the local level. Without an efficient partnership involving a broad group of stakeholders, a municipality cannot produce sufficient encouragement of active ageing. Broader political support and visibility for active ageing policies could encourage policy makers to take more ambitious initiatives.

Along with the toolbox, the other main product of the Q-AGEING project is the Ageing Resource Centre (ARC), developed by the Maribor Economic Institute. It presents a pro-active, virtual methodological centre for community initiatives related to the elderly and active ageing, mainly at the municipal and regional level, but also at the national and EU level. Through the ARC website www.q-arc.eu, the Q-AGEING partnership presents an ageing observatory and contributes efficiently to an existing EU think tank on the issue of ageing.

Most cities in Europe have some important contribution to make to the issue of active ageing, and their ideas can provide a common source of inspiration. That is why we are working together on promoting active ageing.

Tamás Hoffmann,
Mayor of Újbuda, XI. District of Budapest, Hungary

17.4

Percentage of the EU population aged 65+ in 2010 - up from 13.7 percent in 1990

50

Decrease in millions of the EU working age population between 2008 and 2060

173

Local shops providing discounts for elderly people based on a 60+ card introduced by Q-Ageing in one Hungarian region



Project: Q-AGEING
ERDF funding: € 1 768 345
Duration: 2008 – 2012
Website: www.q-ageing.eu



Bringing new skills back to old regions

With the 2004 and 2007 expansions of the EU, many workers left central Europe to find new jobs and gain new skills. Getting those workers to return home can counter brain drain and boost human capital. But reintegration can be challenging. Re-Turn investigates the needs of returning migrants, develops tools that meet those needs and creates a joint action plan to encourage returnees.

As central Europeans seek to come home from the rest of Europe, bringing back new-found skills and energy, the Re-Turn project is finding ways to make the road home a smooth one. The trend of westward migration of European workers began during the first decade of the 21st century, as many central European countries joined the European Union. Economically motivated migration of young and well-educated people from the new Member States to high-income countries is still dominating international migration flows in Europe, thanks to the free right to work in other EU Member States.

Yet the migration is not all going in one direction. Statistics also show the willingness of central Europeans to come back to their home countries, and it is estimated that about 50 percent of emigrants will return to their home countries within five years. The problem is that their return is often associated with significant problems of reintegration. Regional stakeholders must acknowledge the ability of returning migrants to support economic development of their home regions. The returnees offer a huge potential for regional development as they have gained new social, cultural and professional competences while being abroad.

Photo: © Robert Nadler

“ I didn’t want to stay abroad forever, so I took it as an experience and returned to Hungary. I prefer staying close to my family and friends rather than only considering the money I could gain. ”

Eszter Sziladi, Re-Migrant, Hungary

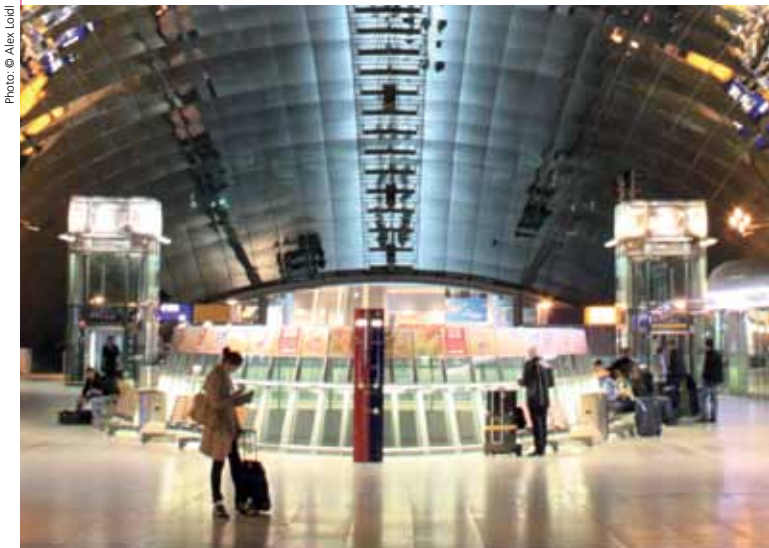
Support to return migration

Re-Turn’s main activities involve creating and implementing services to support migrants who wish to return. The project promotes these returnees as a source of innovative ideas and entrepreneurial energy who can drive development. Re-Turn was set up to develop, test and implement sustainable joint strategies that can create framework conditions for building human capital in participating regions. While the target group of the project is returning migrants, much of the work of Re-Turn involves others who can impact the situation for returnees – including decision makers, senior officers from regional authorities or labour market organisations, training and qualification organisations, business associations, economic development organisations, and social groups representing migrants.

Tools and policies

Throughout the project, the 12 partners develop, share, test and implement new support policies, tools and services to promote return migration. Their goal is to compensate for losses of human capital in earlier periods by getting educated migrants back to their home region – and by capitalising on returnees’ skills, such as intercultural awareness, improved flexibility and language competence. One of the first outputs of the project is the Re-Turn project online visualisation (<http://return-platform.um.si/>), showing current remigration trends at the national and regional levels. Other outputs include a toolkit with successful methods and instruments, a handbook with transnational joint planning and management tools, and a transnational strategy for attracting and reintegrating migrants. These tools help provide a framework for all potential re-migrants who want to invest their competences and their passion in their homeland.

Photo: © Alex Lodi



Project: Re-Turn

ERDF funding: € 1 772 461

Duration: 2011 – 2014

Website: www.re-migrants.eu

8
Regions covered by Re-Turn case studies

75
Percentage of returning nationals among immigrants in Poland in 2009

2 000
Participants to the Re-Turn online survey



Photo: © Ament Erzébet

Making the 50-plus generation an economic plus

Europe is maturing. Experts predict that 25 percent of the population will be older than 50 by the year 2020. Although many Europeans aged 55 and older want to work, some 50 percent of that age group is unemployed. Senior Capital treats the 50-plus population as an economic opportunity – a group of people who are willing and able to contribute to making Europe wealthier and more competitive.

Through transnational cooperation, the Senior Capital project encourages investment in older workers and promotes a positive change in society's attitude towards the economic potential of seniors, who can offer us a wealth of knowledge and experience. Senior Capital involves a partnership between regions from Austria, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland and Slovenia. It is designed to build on the Q-Ageing project, which promoted "active ageing" as a way to keep older citizens healthier, more socially engaged and more involved in the economy. Senior Capital takes up where that project left off, by work-

ing with all of society to realise the economic potential of older, more experienced workers. The growth in the 50-plus demographic in Europe poses a double threat: While providing older citizens with pensions, as well as special social and health care, is an economic burden, the low employment level among this group means they contribute little to economic productivity. An obvious solution to these threats is to increase the level of employment of older citizens. But simple fixes, like raising the retirement age, will not impact the employment level if the supply and demand for older workers remains

Being a student again is an opportunity to keep my job or to get a new job. I don't feel old enough to retire.

Resident of Ujbuda, Budapest, Hungary

unchanged. On the supply side, the challenge to employing seniors is the need to upgrade their abilities, so that they meet the needs of today's job market. On the demand side, employers need to understand the value of older workers, who are often stigmatised as being less productive and more expensive.

Aging population as an opportunity

Instead of seeing it as a threat, Senior Capital sees the growth in Europe's 50-plus demographic as an opportunity. If they are trained and ready for today's economy, older workers can bring valuable knowledge and experience that makes them a major asset for their employers. The project partners understand the need to work with all stakeholders, to change attitudes and policies, so that employment of older workers can be increased. For this reason, Senior Capital produced studies on various solutions that have already been used in the European Union to educate and employ older workers. The project also used local market analyses to determine employment needs – and mapped the institutional, legal and financial barriers to hiring workers in the 50-plus demographic. Using these studies and analyses, Senior Capital then undertook pilot projects designed to increase the employment of senior citizens. Combining the knowledge from the research with the practical lessons learned in conducting pilot projects, Senior Capital was able to formulate documents designed to support policy making in this area. The project is expected to result in better methodologies for educating seniors; an increased role for local and regional authorities in educating and employing seniors; and an improved overall labour pool, which is enhanced through the knowledge and capacity of older, more experienced workers.

Photo: © Ament Erzébet



Project: Senior Capital
ERDF funding: € 1 312 770
Duration: 2012 – 2014
Website: www.seniorcapital.eu

105

Good practices on educational and employment models for the elderly collected by the project

16

Percentage of people over 50 who consider themselves elderly

2

Billion people who will be more than 60 years old by 2050



Photo: © SPES

Remote medical monitoring means better care

Innovations in telemedicine offer patients the possibility to enjoy better monitoring of their health and safety while reducing unneeded trips to the doctor. The SPES project helps encourage use of this technology by implementing a tele-health platform that serves people dealing with respiratory problems, dementia, disabilities and social exclusion in four central European cities.

Geographical isolation can be a problem for anyone, but it is especially difficult for those who have chronic illnesses and need frequent medical care. As they seek to bridge the gap between patients and care givers on the regional and local level, health service providers need to be able to test and adopt e-health instruments. Working in cooperation with a transnational team, and some of the most advanced technology providers within each region, SPES helps encourage innovative and shared solutions in the field of telemedicine. The result is that patients and caregivers have better communication, an improvement that amounts to enhanced

geographical integration of the regions involved. The SPES project implements an information and communication technology platform that is connected to different medical devices and installed in a patients' home. The platform creates a link with medical care providers and a system that is able to monitor the patients' health status. The SPES platform can also connect other patients and can serve as social communication channel. The platform is based on a low-cost personal computer and offers a user-friendly graphic interface. It provides the patient with a user entertainment system; it interacts with the health provider's

“ She is delighted to find songs in her memory book that she liked listening to in her youth. I can see that from her smile. ”

Woman whose mother suffers from dementia commenting on progress made thanks to SPES brain stimulation software

call centre through a central server; and it functions as a telemedicine system, collecting medical data through sensors deployed at the patients' home.

Solution enhances people's lives

By exploiting this easy-to-use telemedicine solution, patients can lower their displacement costs and reduce the time they might spend visiting care providers, such as hospitals, general practitioners or medical centres. The reduction in travel time and improved medical monitoring enhances the quality of patients' daily lives and their general well-being.

For example, in Ferrara, Italy, SPES initiative provided patients suffering from breathing problems with a system that can remotely monitor their health status via a pulse oximeter and other non-invasive medical devices – all of which work while the patient stays comfortably at home. The SPES pilot in Vienna, Austria endeavours to enhance the quality of life of older persons with dementia using localisation devices that do not restrict their movements. In Boskovice, the Czech Republic, 40 mobility-impaired clients are trained in a range of registered social services, such as education and social and professional integration. And in Kosice, Slovakia, older persons are able to enrich their daily routine with various communication and social features that allow them to get involved in leisure activities or to receive psychological support.

Along with operating these pilot efforts, the SPES project contributes to better cooperation between the regions participating in tele-assistance applications. The project does this by encouraging cross-border collaboration on the highest political level, initiating dialogue on the supra-regional level and promoting innovative developments between the partner regions.

40

Mobility impaired seniors in Brno pilot who are trained in a range of registered social services

80

Percentage of patients in Ferrara pilot who appreciated the ability to easily visualise and store their clinical data

36

Million people worldwide suffering from dementia



Photo: © SPES

Project: SPES
 ERDF funding: € 1 637 464
 Duration: 2011 – 2014
 Website: www.spes-project.eu



Preserving wild plant customs and creating jobs

Wild plants are coveted for use as spices or natural medicine, and collecting them can provide income. But knowledge of our grandparents is often getting lost and harvesters struggle with identifying herbs correctly and finding them. The Traditional and wild project develops a strategy to share such knowledge, in order to preserve old folk wisdom about plants and provide income for vulnerable groups in rural parts of central Europe.

Even though there is a renaissance in demand for wild plants, which can be used for food and medicine, the wealth of traditional knowledge about harvesting and utilising those plants is disappearing. By reviving old customs, the Traditional and wild project preserves vital knowledge while providing employment in some isolated, marginalised parts of central Europe.

The project works by helping to educate the general public on the potential benefits of sustainably harvesting wild plants, while also encouraging the development of a market for these products.

Up to the middle of the 20th century, wild-growing plants provided an important source of livelihood for many people in the countryside. The benefits of these plants have long been understood, and many of them are now being confirmed by science: It is obviously a folk tale that black elder expels witches, but it is true that nettles can alleviate arthritis pain and rose hip is extremely rich in vitamin C. Wild plants often have real uses as medicine, dietary supplements and seasonings.

While consumers can benefit from better knowledge of these plants, there are also major benefits for marginalised

Photo: © Péter Radócsi

“ We like the project because the task is a very real one! Recently, the amount of wild collected medicinal plants has severely decreased in central European countries. There is huge need for training. ”

Zoltán Czirbus,
President of the Medicinal Herb Association,
Budapest, Hungary

groups, particularly Roma, elderly or women. But before people living in remote areas can supplement their incomes in this traditional way, they need to know: Which plants are useful? How and when should one collect them? What is the optimal way of processing and marketing them? The questions are numerous. Answering them is the goal of the Traditional and wild project.

Training and developing demand

Hundreds of schoolchildren have visited a cottage in the village of Kunadacs, in the middle of the Hungarian plain. Through a pilot initiative of the Traditional and wild project, children can learn about the treasures of the plant kingdom from the cottage’s staff, and they can also see posters and dried plants, and take advantage of other educational tools there.

Similar information is imparted to visitors at a demonstration room in Kolbuszowa, Poland, and at herbal gardens in Northern Primorska, Slovenia.

Traditional and wild seeks to educate all age groups. Its training materials use colourful pictures to show the right way to collect, process and utilise wild plants. While it teaches people how to use nature, the project also explains the importance of protecting natural habitats and preserving sustainable resources.

Because it encourages use of wild plants, the project helps create a demand. To increase demand further, project partners also helped develop model products like tea, marmalade and soaps from these plants, and showed how to bring them to the market. Certification like Fairwild or organic labelling may increase the value of these products. Utilisation of wild plant resources can help maintain rural communities and promote generating income for their inhabitants if certain factors are in place: Natural resources, professional knowledge, management, infrastructure and market demand. Traditional and wild demonstrates how to encourage these factors.

1 200

Wild-growing plants used in international commerce

800

People trained by Traditional and wild

5

Percentage of migration from some rural villages in the last ten years

Photo: © Traditional and wild



Project: Traditional and wild

ERDF funding: €996 039

Duration: 2011 – 2014

Website: www.traditionalandwild.eu



Rural regions seek to keep women from leaving

Rural areas of central Europe are experiencing an exodus of their young, educated population – especially women. As a result, these areas suffer from a loss of skilled workers, and a reduced birth rate. The WOMEN project seeks to counter female brain drain in rural regions of central Europe with initiatives aimed at employing women and improving their career opportunities.

A number of central European regions are challenged by the outbound migration of well-educated young women. This trend results in a lack of skilled labour and a severe imbalance of the gender ratio among the working-age population of these regions. Social cohesion, economic competitiveness and employment are consequently at stake. The outbound migration of young women has a double negative impact on regional demographic development: In the short term, the reduction of young people increases the median age of the population and the aging of the entire society. In the long term, the future demographic perspectives

are worsened, because the reduction in the number of women aged 16-35 means there are fewer newborn children, which leads to a steady depopulation of the area. The partners in the WOMEN project share their knowledge and test out pilot initiatives designed to counter female brain drain and to raise awareness of the issue among all stakeholders and among the target group of well-educated young women. After conducting scientific monitoring and a scientific review, the project partners used the results of their research to create a transnational strategy and joint action plan.

Photo: © Fotolia

“ We welcome the activities of the WOMEN project as we believe that image campaigns, could contribute to a better perception of the region and attract investments – and that they also could raise awareness and encourage people to stay. ”

Leitenberger Helmut,
Mayor of Leibnitz, Styria, Austria

They also tested pilots designed to limit further brain-drain of young women from rural areas that are already severely challenged by demographic change.

Pilot initiatives

The pilots undertaken by the WOMEN project seek to improve the images of the partner regions for young women, to raise awareness of the problem and to adjust personnel policies to meet the needs of young women. Specific pilot activities include the following:

- The image campaign contributes to a positive image of the partner regions, aiming to show young women the good sides of these regions, in order to provide them with incentives to stay instead of migrating elsewhere.
- A “women are future – award” raised awareness about female brain drain and bestowed recognition on projects seeking to combat this problem. Good practices were encouraged through the transnational competition, which gave awards to spotlight female-friendly businesses, successful female entrepreneurs and other positive efforts. The winners of the “women are future – award” became role models for each region’s effort to prevent female brain drain.
- Demography coaches were established in each partner region. The coaches work in a transnational network to elaborate a joint curricula and methodology for training personnel managers in the field of demography management. This training helps human resources managers better foresee demographic developments and to make the necessary adjustments in the organisation and personnel management of their companies – for instance through better participation of women in internal knowledge management processes.
- Social networks of successful female entrepreneurs were established, to increase the social attachment of women to their regions.

6

Image campaigns run by WOMEN

180

Women nominated for the “women are future – award”

100

Portraits of role models displayed on the WOMEN website

Photo: © MLV Sachsen-Anhalt



Project: WOMEN

ERDF funding: € 1 756 042

Duration: 2012 – 2014

Website: www.women-project.eu



Qualifying local youth for local jobs

Under current demographic trends, central Europe's population is getting older, and there are fewer young, skilled workers to staff local companies and help regional economies grow. Young people need better skills, as well as reasons to stay in their regions. YURA addresses these challenges by encouraging cooperation on innovative initiatives: Ranging from training to partnerships between schools and businesses.

YURA brings together authorities, businesses and educational institutions in regions of Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy and Poland. These partners work on creative solutions to demographic challenges, especially on improving vocational systems to address skill shortages for local and regional economies.

Competition for skilled labour

Because birth rates have stagnated around central Europe, and even decreased in some places, there is a shortage of

capable young workers who can replace the older workers as they retire. Regions located outside of major conurbations feel the situation even more acutely: Increased mobility of young generations makes it easy for them to migrate to large cities, where they can best pursue their careers. Often this means that they leave their home region behind. Recruiting qualified staff today is a major challenge for businesses operating in territories affected by out-migration. Companies that want to remain competitive and profitable in the long-term need to be able to prevail in the "race for brains", and they cannot do so if their region is not attractive.

Photo: © IMG - Investitions- und Marketinggesellschaft Sachsen-Anhalt mbH

Public authorities responsible for territorial development have come to recognise that the future economic success of their regions correlates strongly with their attractiveness for young people. This is an area where YURA tries to help.

Transnational youth strategy

The different partners participating in YURA share their knowledge and resources to develop and introduce innovative solutions focusing on the needs of today's youth. Together, YURA partners elaborated a transnational youth strategy that treats young people as a driving force for future regional economic development and innovation. The project also oversaw a total of 18 pilot activities that took place across the six partner regions: In the region of Styria alone, the number of school students participating in "Learning Partnerships" between their schools and local industry ran into four figures. In "Future Laboratories", young people proposed concrete measures, such as free public WiFi, to enhance their region's overall attractiveness. Following a model from the Lower Silesia region, partners organise special courses for their regions' brightest youth, to prepare them for future leadership positions in local companies. And at a "Pupils Research Centre", school students and businesses work together on vocation-oriented projects, such as the construction of a GO Kart track.

Lobbying for change at EU-level

While the pilot initiatives undertaken by the YURA project are helpful, overall demographic trends are not easily reversed. Disparities between European regions will continue to grow unless the EU's cohesion policy starts giving more attention to the improvement of soft factors, even in more isolated regions. This is a common concern of the YURA partner regions, and they will continue to lobby this point beyond the completion of the project.

Inviting school students to get to know our regions' modern enterprises gave us the opportunity to highlight the benefits for them if they stay in their home region. The idea for this pilot came from the entrepreneurs themselves.

Wilfried Köhler, Ministry for Regional Development and Transport, Saxony-Anhalt, Germany

85

Female residents aged 20-29 for every 100 male residents of the same age in Saxony-Anhalt

20

Young persons, aged 17-23, which participated in the YURA transnational youth seminar

18

Pilot projects launched by YURA partners

Photo: © IMG - Investitions- und Marketinggesellschaft Sachsen-Anhalt mbH



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The Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS) of the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme is based in Vienna (Austria) and can be contacted at any time for queries related to finance, project management, or communication. We are looking forward to cooperating with you and can be reached by telephone or e-mail.

CENTRAL EUROPE Programme

Joint Technical Secretariat
Kirchberggasse 33-35/11, A-1070 Vienna, Austria

Phone: +43-1-8908 088 2403
Fax: +43-1-8908 088 2499
info@central2013.eu
www.central2013.eu



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