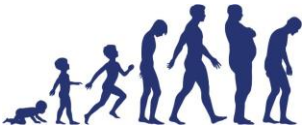
PROMOTION OF THE ACTIVE LIFE OF THE ELDERLY IN BULGARIA

Collection of good practices

РЕПУБЛИКА БЪЛГАРИЯ
Министерство на труда и социалната политика

INTRODUCTION



We live in a rapidly aging world, a global phenomenon, present in our country as well. According to European Commission (EC) forecasts, 30%, or one-third of the population, is expected to be 65 or older, by 2070 (compared to 20% in 2019) and 13% is expected to be at the age of 80 years or older (compared to 6% in 2019). This unprecedented longevity is the result of successes in public health, medicine, as well as improvements in socio-economic conditions around the world and especially in Europe. Such success, however, brings new challenges and opportunities. How can we best ensure that the elderly population maintains their health, productivity, quality of life, dignity and independence for as long as possible? How to ensure equal access to quality health services? How to increase the social participation of senior citizens and their commitment to their health and to prevent diseases, as well as their functional and cognitive regression? How to reduce institutionalization and minimize health and social costs? The answer lies in part in harnessing the power of innovation.

The world and European societies, of which Bulgaria is an integral part, are in a kind of "turning point", where we can use the benefits of innovation, affordable health and information technology, in order to meet the needs of the most rapidly evolving demographic group.

It is to address these challenges and issues posed by the trends of the world's and Europe's population getting aged and to draw public attention to them and to the best ways to address them, the EC has declared 2012 as the European Year of active life of senior people and intergenerational solidarity, in which a number of studies have been carried out

many ideas have been given rise and new practices have been initiated to promote the active life of elder people throughout Europe. Following these initiatives, in 2020 the EC launched the preparation of a Green book on Aging, which is in the process of public discussion until April 2021. It presents the key issues and possible ways to anticipate and respond to the social and economic consequences of the demographic changes and the population aging, as also addressing topics on how to respond to people's needs, taking into account both the challenges that come with the aging of the society and new opportunities. The document analyzes how to ensure sustainable growth against the background of the declining working-age population and how to offer adequate and budgetary sustainable social protection, examines the impact of aging at a regional and local levels.

Demographic trends in Bulgaria

In unison with the world and European demographic processes, the most significant trend in Bulgaria's population development is the aging process. The average age of the population is among the highest not only in the European Union but also in the world. It is growing steadily, from 40.4 years in 2001 to 43.9 years at the end of 2019. In 2019, as a result of negative natural growth, the country's population decreased by 46,545 people. The average life expectancy in the country, calculated for the period 2017 - 2019, is 74.9 years and compared to the previous period (2016 - 2018) increases by 0.1 years. The average life expectancy for men is 71.5 years, while for women it is 7 years higher - 78.5 years. The average life expectancy is 3 years higher for the urban population (75.8 years) than for the rural population (72.8 years).

Demographic policy of MLSP

The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP) manages, coordinates and controls the implementation

of public policy in the field of demographic development, as well as the activity of analyzing, evaluating and forecasting demographic processes in cooperation with other state bodies, social partners and non-governmental organizations. MLSP performs activities on coordination and monitoring of the demographic policy, which is expressed in maintaining an institutional framework and a national mechanism for policy implementation. The MLSP carries out the coordination and management of an interdepartmental working group on demographic issues, which includes representatives of key government agencies, the National Statistical Institute, the National Social Security Institute, the Bulgarian Red Cross, the National Association of Municipalities in Bulgaria, NGOs.

Some of the results achieved by the MLSP in the period 2017-2020:

• Prepared annual plans and reports on the implementation of the Updated National Strategy for Demographic Development of the Population in the Republic of Bulgaria (2012-2030);

• Prepared National Strategy for active life of the elderly in Bulgaria (2019 - 2030);

• Prepared a two-year Plan for the implementation of the National Strategy for Active Life of the Elderly in Bulgaria for the period 2019-2020, which outlines the specific activities and tasks in the implementation of the priorities set in the Strategy;

• Developed regional demographic analyzes and policies and conducted information campaigns throughout the country under the motto “Change is in our hands”;

• The first Law on Enterprises of the Social and Solidarity Economy (LESSE) was adopted in Bulgaria;

• An electronic Register of social enterprises has been created.;

• The certificate mark “Product of social enterprise " is registered ;

• Reaching a minimum pension level of BGN 300;

- In 2021, the poverty line for the country amounts to BGN 369;
- Some results are achieved in terms of solidarity between the generations. In order to draw public attention to the continuity, understanding, respect and care of the elderly, a bell signed with "Solidarity between the generations" was placed in the park-complex "Bells", Sofia.

"We learn and understand the world from our parents, grandparents, teachers, coaches and teachers, friends and colleagues. We pass on what we have learned to our children, grandchildren, students and friends. Solidarity between the generations takes different forms, but the goal is one - to pass on to future generations all Bulgarian traditions, culture, identity, values, folklore; to live well together, to share what we know and can, to rely on each other to meet the challenges of the modern world. "

Dr. Sultanka Petrova, Deputy Minister of Labor and social policy 2017-2021.

National Strategy for Active Life of the Elderly in Bulgaria (2019 – 2030).

Special emphasis on meeting the demographic challenges of the population aging is also placed through the National Strategy for Promoting the Active Life of the Elderly (2019 - 2030). The strategic goal is to create conditions for active and dignified life of the elderly by providing equal opportunities for their full participation in the society's economic and social life, which will be achieved by implementing the following priorities by 2030:

- Priority 1: Promoting the active life of older people in the field of employment
- Priority 2: Promoting the active life of older people in the field of participation in society;

- Priority 3: Promoting the active life of the elderly in the field of independent living;
- Priority 4: Creating capacity and a favorable environment for active living of older people at a national and regional level.

Collection of good practices for active life of the elderly

Preparing this collection, our team tried to identify some of the best practices in promoting the active life of the elderly in a number of Bulgarian municipalities, from the six individual planning regions in the country, as well as we selected interesting European practices, which can be borrowed and interpreted in our municipalities, according to the four priorities of the National Strategy for Active Life of the Elderly in Bulgaria, mentioned above.

The purpose of this publication is **to promote the efforts of the MLSP to increase the visibility of the policy in the field of active life of the elderly**. As Europeans, we live longer in good health. Promoting the active involvement of all stakeholders in the implementation of measures for promoting the active life of older people through innovative models of cooperation and partnership are today's challenges for which the MLSP seeks support from representatives of its possible social partners - trade unions and employers, central and local government, community centers, health facilities, civil society, media, researchers, etc. Efforts are aimed at encouraging those who have tirelessly brought us up and passed us family traditions and values, and we must treat all of them with respect and gratitude.

By presenting the various good practices included in the collection, we strive to chart a course for all stakeholders to prioritize the development and dissemination

of technological and social solutions to address the most common needs and problems of older people experiencing different levels of physical and cognitive functional limitations, creating new opportunities for better social inclusion.

We sincerely hope that the initiatives described here will be a source of creativity and inspiration for the development of local policies aimed at creating conditions for stimulating the active life of the elderly in all Bulgarian municipalities!

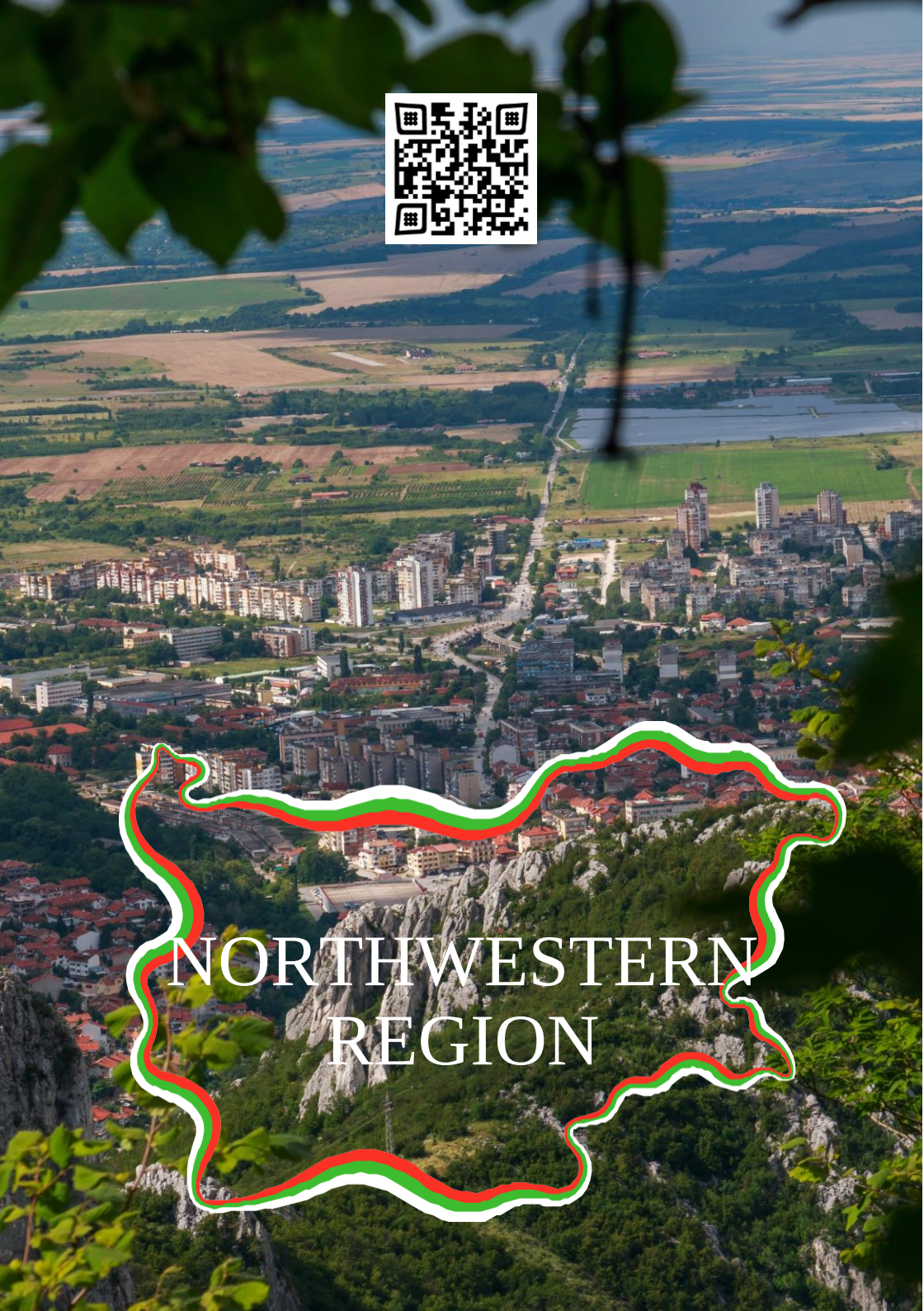
Enjoy reading!

Dr. Sultanka Petrova
MLSP Deputy Minister

More information about the demographic policy in the country "National Strategy for Active Life of the Elderly in Bulgaria (2019 - 2030)", as well as about the various initiatives and activities organized and conducted to support the active life of the elderly in Bulgaria can be found at the **Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, Directorate for Living Standards, Demographic Policy and Social Investments**:

Website: www.mlsp.government.bg
Email: mlsp@mlsp.government.bg
Address: 2,,Triaditsa “ str, 1051 Sofia
tel: +359 2 8119 443

Good Practis Bulgaria


NORTHWESTERN
REGION

Project "Innovative models of care for people with chronic diseases and permanent disabilities in the community "

Promotion of active life in the field of independent living of the elderly

The initiative

The aim of the project is to create an innovative model for remote monitoring of chronic diseases - teleassistance / telecare using modern information and communication technologies (ICT) in the districts of Vratsa, Vidin and Montana. Thus, the access of vulnerable and lonely people with chronic diseases and permanent disabilities to professional health and social care will be improved and users in remote and small settlements will be covered.

What is it like?

The project started in May 2019 and has an implementation period of 4 years. During this period it is planned to build three new "Home Care"Centers, a call center on the territory of Vratsa and to introduce 24-hour monitoring of the health and psychosocial status of the users in order to manage the risks resulting from the separate living of the elderly, and other factors such as deteriorating health, lack of adequate medical care and social services, etc.

Organization:
Bulgarian Red Cross

Partners:
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Labor and Social Policy
- Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities

Budget:
- Over 3 000 000 euros

Where is it implemented?
- The districts of Vratsa, Vidin and Montana

Participants:
- 750 users,aged 50+

Links:
- http://e-homecarebg.com

„ Now I can sleep peacefully, I can take my medicine by myself. They call me when there is something wrong with my indicators. It is so nice. "

Iceland Liechtenstein Norway grants

БЪЛГАРСКИ ЧЕРВЕН КРЪСТ

Focus group: 50+

About 750 people will be covered by the project, and 500 of them will receive "smart" devices that will quickly connect them to a specialist if necessary. From the Bulgarian Red Cross they see this as a step towards overcoming the stereotype that the patient should go to the hospital. The so-called telemedicine is aimed at people over the age of 50 who are single and in need of round-the-clock care. The project covers people aged 50+ from 7 municipalities in the districts of Vratsa, Vidin and Montana, and within the 4-year period more than 81 jobs will be created and more than 700 users will be covered.

Main goals of the teleassistance / telecare service

The piloting of the teleassistance / telecare service in Bulgaria aims to:

- reaching to ones of the most vulnerable members of our society - the elderly people;
- support for their individual needs;
- providing a 24-hour connection with the professionals in the call center; continuous, automatic and remote monitoring of emergencies in real time;
- managing the health risks arising from the separate living of the elderly people;
- liaising with other health and social care providers.

Upgrading the home care centers

Now the activity of these centers will be upgraded, and the sick and lonely elderly people will receive smart devices to support their constant monitoring and communication with them.

„Smart-Lib” – Communication center in "HRISTO BOTEV" library, Vratsa

Promoting the active life of the elderly in the field of independent living

Organization:
„Hristo Botev“ Regional library, Vratsa

Partners:
- „Global libraries-Bulgaria“ Foundation
- „Prosveta-1915” Community center, Mizia
- „Razvitie1892” Community center, Byala Slatina

Budget:
- Project funds

Where is it implemented?
- Vratsa district

Participants:
- About 200 persons over 55 years

Links:
- https://libvratsa.org/

„ I don't want to be dependent. I have a daughter abroad with whom I want to be in constant contact. I had a hard time, we are learning a lot of new things ... I assure you, this will be useful for everyone! “

The Initiative

Since 2016, “Hristo Botev” Regional Library has been organizing trainings for working with mobile devices and applications for people over 55 years of age. There is a communication center with access to these technologies, equipped with tablets, smartphones and e-readers. The center was established under the "Smart - “Lib” project, implemented with the support of “Global Libraries - Bulgaria” Foundation.

What is it like?

Elderly people from Vratsa district have the opportunity to join the lifelong learning initiative by enrolling in free trainings for working with mobile devices and applications organized by the library. The information specialists include in their schedules for outsourced trainings settlements from the whole district of Vratsa. The aim is the elderly people to be part of the digital transformation of the new world by acquiring skills for working with the new technologies and the Internet, to facilitate their communication, to improve their quality of life, and to prepare for the e-government services.

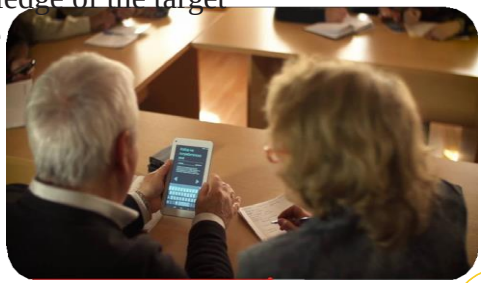
Focus Group: 55+

The initiative covers a total of 96 participants in the implementation of the project, as well as another 100 participants in outsourced trainings in the field. The age range is from 55 to 75 years.

The Impact of the Project

The "Smart-Lib" project managed to change the lives of 96 elderly citizens from Vratsa, Byala Slatina and Mizia. In the period November 2016 - March 2017, 96 users from the cities of Vratsa, Byala Slatina and Mizia, as well as 24 library specialists underwent the trainings. Through the implementation of this project we managed to increase their quality of life and reduce their information isolation, as well as to prepare this group of users for e-government services. 3 video lessons "Golden Skills" were prepared, which give clear explanations for practical skills when working with a smartphone, tablet and e-reader. They are provided to the ten libraries in the municipal centers in Vratsa district. They provide an opportunity to train new users who are not covered by the project. The film "My Smart-Lib" was also created, which shows how the acquired skills change the life of a trained user. The film has been sent to 26 regional libraries in the country.

In 2020, the initiative is partially implemented. Due to the introduction of anti-epidemic measures, no trainings are planned in the halls of the library, but considering the technical knowledge of the target group, organizing the course online is impossible. The devices from the communication center in the "Common Reading Room" department remain available to all users.



„Kula – sport for everyone “

Promoting the active life of the Elderly people in the field of participation in the society

The Initiative

Sports Club "Kula - sport for all" was established by the elderly people with the idea to support sports and physical activity of the elderly in the municipality of Kula, and its goals are aimed at:

- Development of mass sports among the elderly for health and longevity;
- Strengthening the physical and mental health of the elderly through sports and cultural activities;
- Study of the experience of cross-border municipalities for the development of mass sports among the elderly population;

The main activities of the club include:

- Organizing and conducting active sports events for adults, incl. sports tournaments in the country and abroad (Serbia);
- Organizing and conducting seminars;
- Organizing and conducting balneotherapy procedures for elderly;
- Organizing and conducting competitions, dancing in the water, recreating traditional customs and exchanging experience with retirement clubs from Serbia and others.

Organization:

"Kula - sport for everyone"Sports Club

Partners:

- Kula Municipality
- Sports clubs for the elderly
- Sports clubs at the retirement clubs in Serbia and Romania

Budget:

- Around BGN 10,000

Where is it implemented?

- Kula Municipality, Vidin district

Participants:

- Over 50 people from retirement clubs / clubs for the disabled

Links:

http://obshtina-kula.com

„ Tournaments make us laugh from the heart. A person is just cheerful, and this is the most important thing, because it is a therapy for our health. "

When and where it takes place?

Sports tournaments started 4 years ago. They are held annually, mostly outdoors. The sports and other activities of the elderly are usually held twice a week in the stadium, gym, tennis court, swimming pool and seminar room provided free of charge by the municipality.

The main organizers of the tournaments are the municipalities of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Serbia.

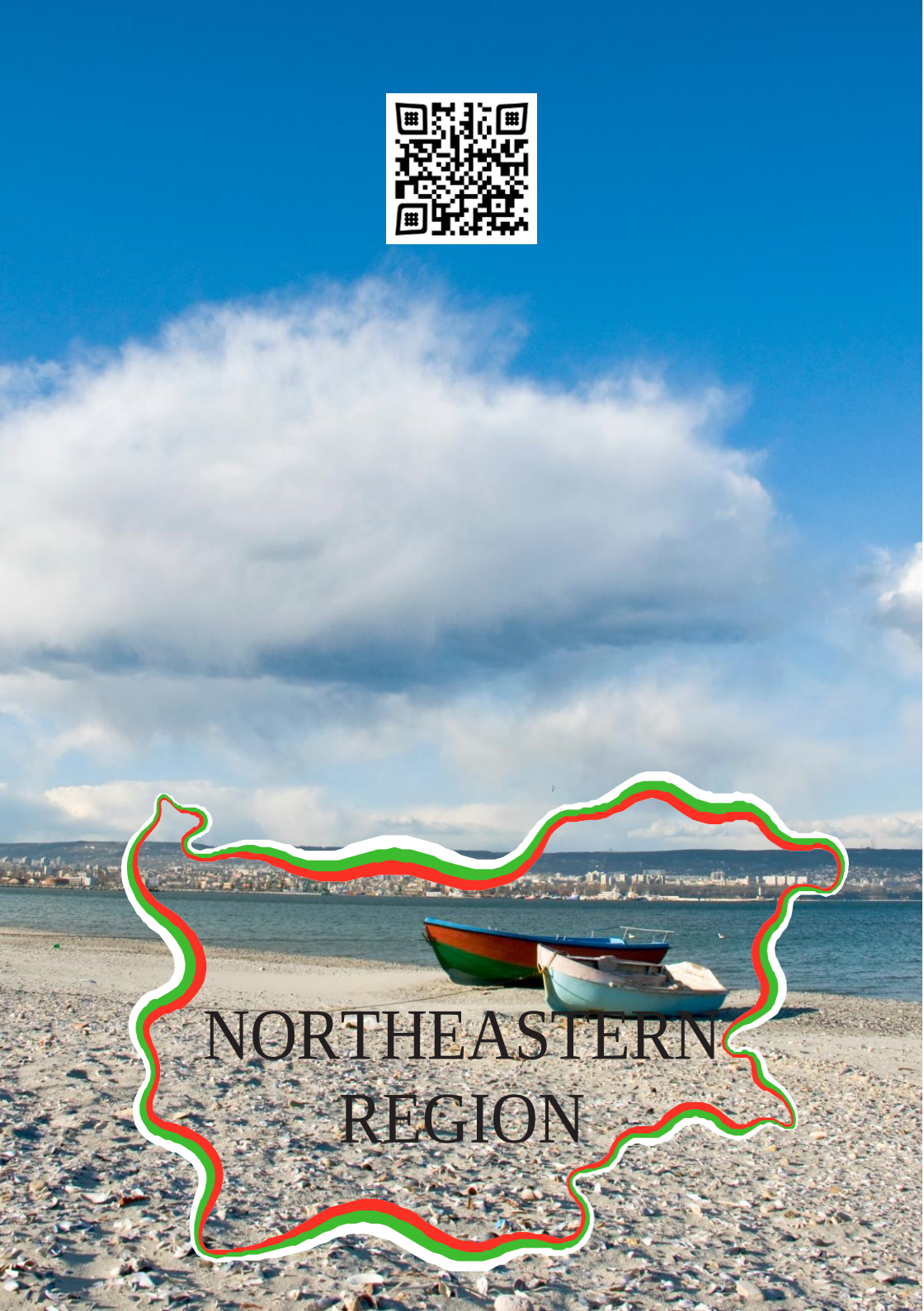
The Union of the Disabled and the Union of the Blind of both countries are also involved in the implementation of the initiatives. The activities of the club are actively supported by the Municipality of Kula with the provision of funds and other support.

The results and effects for the elderly people

The spirit, physical activity and general culture of the elderly improve significantly after participating in sports and other events organized by the association. Through sports, people break away from their problems and feel complete.

What follows?

The club continues to operate actively, and in June 2021 is expected to organize a tournament in the municipality of Kula for retirement clubs from Northern Bulgaria with guests from Serbia, and for the fall sports tournaments at the sea with retirees from all over the country are planned, if the situation related to the spread of COVID-19 allows it.

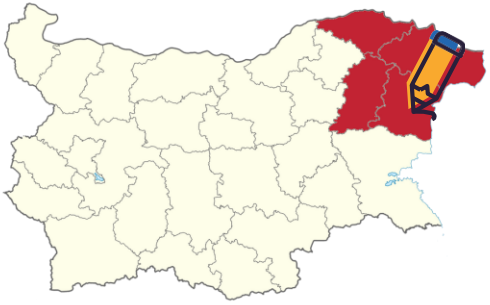


NORTHEASTERN REGION

„ Olympic Games for everyone “ in the Municipality of Aksakovo

Promoting the active life of elderly people in the field of participation in the society

Creating capacity and favorable environment for active life of the elderly at national and regional level



The Initiative

The initiative "Olympic Games for Everyone" was launched within the "Common Sports - the competition between generations as a motivation for sports and a healthy lifestyle of senior citizens" project, funded by the European program ERASMUS + Sports, where the Municipality of Aksakovo is a partner of the Portuguese municipality of Villa Nova de Cerveira. The project aims to promote the active lifestyle among people over the age of 60, motivating them to practice sports activities.

The first Olympiad was attended by 101 competitors aged between 60 and 82, and the second - 65 adults between 60 and 83 years.

When and where it takes place?

The first Olympic Games were held in September 2018 and include competitions in the following sports: athletics; swimming; beach volleyball; basketball; football.

More than 100 participants take part in the Olympiad.

Organization:
Aksakovo Municipality

Partners:

- Football sports club
- Children's karate club
- SRIC – Aksakovo
- SRIC – Vladislavovo region, Varna

Budget:

- Around BGN 4500

Where is it implemented?

- Aksakovo Municipality

Participants:

- About 170 adults over 60 years.

Links:
https://aksakovo.bg

„ Weekly workouts are a good way not only to maintain the physical activity of the elderly, but also for the prevention of social isolation in retirement age “

Within the Days of Aksakovo in August 2019, the Olympic Games for all were held for the second time. More than 60 elderly take part in the second Olympics. The oldest participant was awarded - at the age of 83. The Olympics are held outdoors at the stadium in the town of Aksakovo and at the sports playgrounds in the town.

During the first Olympics, the Kamchia Sports Complex provided the swimming pool for use.

The preparation for the Olympics is training for physical activity. Twice a week the elderly do exercise. Two months before the Olympics, the training started, focusing on the sports disciplines in which there will be competitions.

Results and effects for the elderly

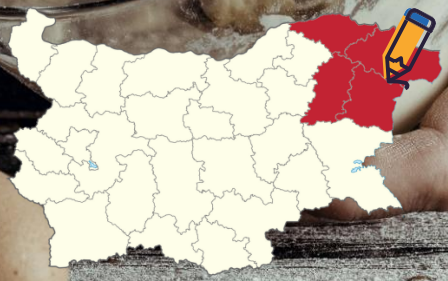
Weekly training is a good way not only to maintain the physical activity of the elderly, but also to prevent social exclusion at retirement age. In surveys conducted among the participants in the project, the added value is the social inclusion and the opportunities of the elderly to gather and communicate.

What's next?

Within the project implementation, elderly people get tested for certain physical indicators every 6 months. The results of the study are summarized in a report, which will be prepared by the end of February 2021, and a short summary will be translated into Bulgarian and published on the website of Aksakovo Municipality.

Increasing the competitiveness of people at pre-retirement age

Promoting the active life of the elderly in the field of employment



Organization:

Balchik Municipality

Partners from Romania:

- Tuzla Municipality (leading partner)
- Adjijea Municipality
- Kompana Municipality

Budget:

- Around BGN 260 000

Where is it implemented?

- Balchik Municipality

Participants:

- Over 80 people aged between 55 and 70 years

Links:

http://www.balchik.bg

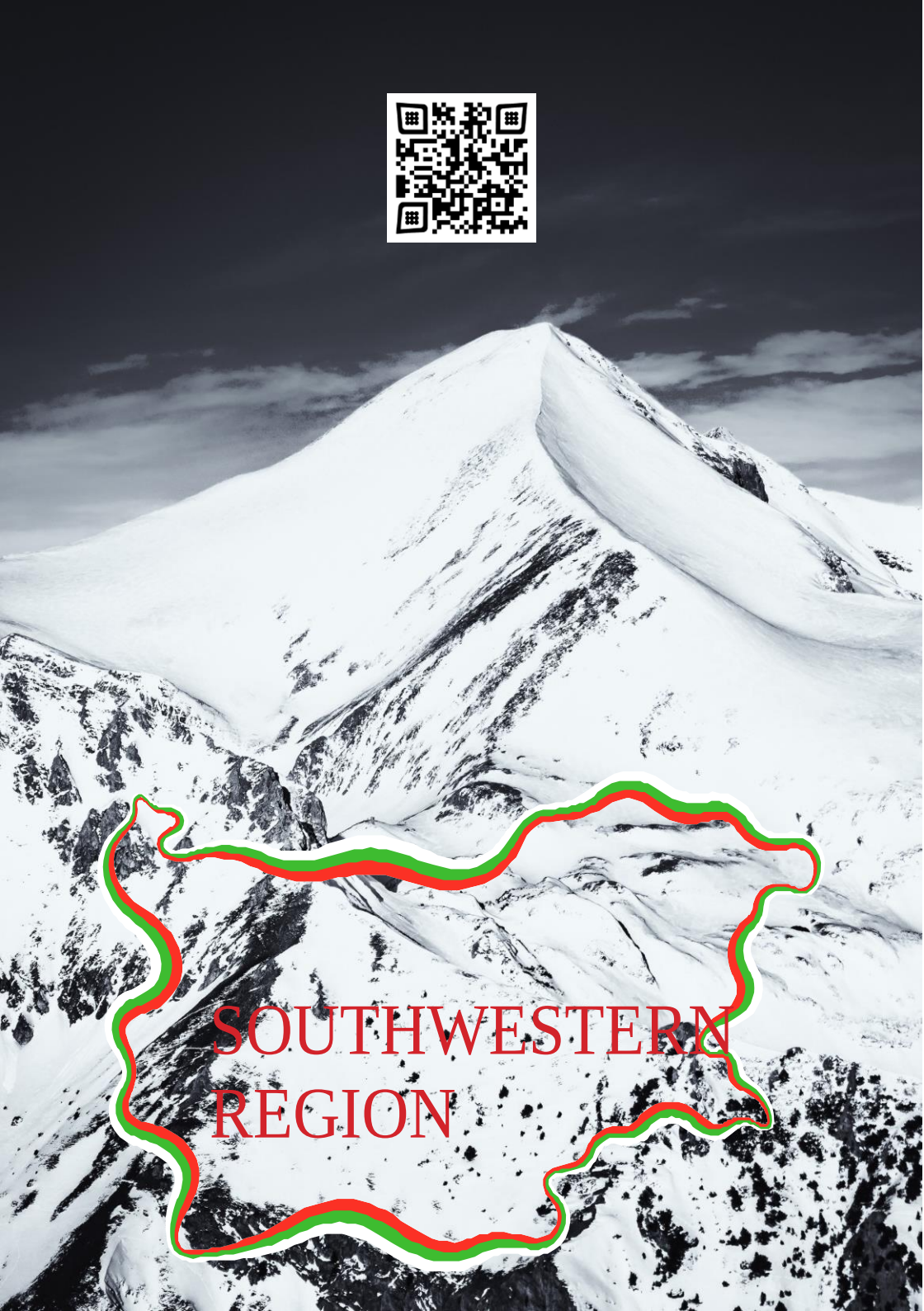
„ Those wishing to enroll in the courses must be between 55 and 70 years old and completed secondary education. The unemployed have an advantage.“

The Initiative

The project is aimed at raising the qualification of 50 participants aged between 55 and 70 years by enrolling in training in one of the following professions: "Baker", "Plumber", "Administrator", “Security guard” and “Babysitter”, with 5 groups of 10 people formed for each of the professions.

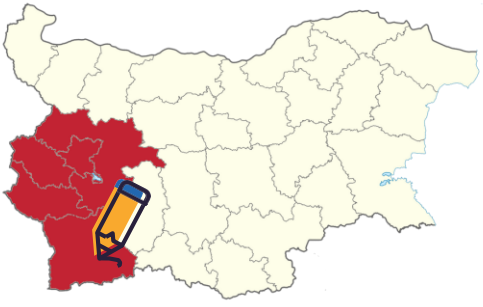
All 50 students undergo a computer course for beginners and a foreign language course - optional: English, Italian, Spanish or German language. In addition to the trainings, within the project 2 cooperation agreements were concluded between all project partners, the Employment Agency of Bulgaria and the Employment Agency of the Province of Constanta, designed to strengthen the cooperation in the field of labor force and especially aimed at integrating older people into the labor market.

Two job fairs were also organized, one in the municipality of Balchik (Bulgaria) and one in the municipality of Tuzla (Romania), where jobseekers and jobseekers from Romania and Bulgaria met. Within the project, a total of 83 participants from Balchik (Bulgaria) and 143 participants from the District of Constanta (Romania) were covered in joint local initiatives for employment and joint training in the period 2017 - 2019.


SOUTHWESTERN
REGION

Community center „Izgrev – 1930”, Banichan

Promoting the active life of older people in the field of participation in society



"Izgrev - 1930" community center in Banichan implements a number of initiatives and activities aimed at stimulating the active life of the elderly and their participation in social events in the village and municipality. The guiding principles for implementation of the initiatives are the work with young people and transfer of experience and knowledge from old to young, innovation with a focus on practice-oriented solutions and their implementation through traditional and innovative approaches to knowledge about agriculture, nature and culture inheritance. The activities are different, depending on the event and the occasion, but always involve three or four generations, thus ensuring the transmission and continuity of traditions and customs between generations.

Some of the initiatives organized and conducted by the community center with the participation of the elderly people from the region are the following:

- "Banichan's knitted socks, the magic of beauty and art" - a project with which the village has become famous all over the world, and the socks has reached five continents in over 25 countries, incl. to the catwalk in Paris, as well as to the royal court in Buckingham - for the wedding of Harry and Megan,

Organization:
"Izgrev- 1930" Community center
Banichan, Gotse Delchev municipality

Partners:

- Municipality of Gotse Delchev
- Other organizations from the region and the country

Where is it realized?

- Municipality of Gotse Delchev

Participants:

- Participants at an age range from 1 year to 85 years.

Links:
Facebook – "Izgrev" Community center"

„Every attention to the elderly is our duty "

Duke and Duchess of Sussex. Socks are knitted in a unique and authentic way on 5 hooks, as they have been knitted by our ancestors; they are very colorful and each hook has a different color.

- “My personal cultural treasure”, “Living socks” - a project of CODANEC, which has won third prize in an international competition between the countries of the Danube region for 2020.
- Ogledna Banitsa, Rural Labor and Delicious Water Onions, festival Banichan 2019, was held after winning a special award, when participating at the Southeast region of the Republic of Northern Macedonia, Korea and others. The onion is one of the 30 flavors in the Bulgaria's Treasury of Tastes. The community center has an idea to register it as a
- “Protected designation of origin” or “Protected geographical indication” under EU schemes. Works with BAS and the representative of SLOW FOOD for Bulgaria and the Balkans.
- "Adopt stork's nest" - an idea that has received worldwide acclaim, as all 12 nests were adopted by people from around the world (the nest with the first in our country and in Greece IP camera was adopted by Japan).
- Organizing trips to neighboring countries (R N Macedonia, etc.) and training of adults in case of floods and subsequent crises.
- “The latest old tale: The cultural symbols of Banichan” - a project that has won worldwide recognition with the only embroidered map with the symbols and relics of the village on it and the award of the Bulgarian Cartographic Association.
- “Colorful tales without end, on the embroidered pistols of Banichan” won the national AGORA award (A Community Centers' Oscar), and the embroidered pishtyumals photos were uploaded to the online library at the Bulgarian base on Livingston Island, Antarctica.
- • A school competition for generations, as a part of the European Year for Active Aging and Solidarity between Generations, etc.

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Other initiatives in Gotse Delchev

- **Golden Wedding Festival**

Since 2010 the organization of the Bulgarian Red Cross in Gotse Delchev gathers invites married couples with half a century of family life at the "Golden wedding" festival.

Traditionally, the golden wedding is held with many songs and dances, with memories of many years in the common home, with the care of children and everyday life, with the pride of grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

The tradition of golden weddings has started by Gotse Delchev and has been shared over the years with regional organizations of the Bulgarian Red Cross in Rousse, Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, and other parts of Bulgaria. The Golden Wedding brings together couples with over 50 years of married life, thus uniting people over the age of 70, and is a part of the initiatives for encouraging the participation of older people in society and stimulating their active Lifestyle.

- **"Baba Residence" - the village of Lazhnitsa**

Baba Residence is an initiative of the Idea Factory, which in 2017 was implemented in the village of Lazhnitsa, Gotse Delchev municipality with the participation of 9 young people from Sofia, Pleven, Stara Zagora, and Plovdiv. "Baba Residence" connects young people from the cities with elderly people in villages all over Bulgaria. Resident participants live for 1 month in elderly households.

This kind of interaction results in specific products, services and initiatives based on local knowledge and culture and corresponding to the specific needs of the people in the villages. The young people help in the work and tasks of the everyday life of the elderly people, being their guests, in the meantime collecting folklore data about songs, customs, weddings and other events and the way they are held in the village.

Cultural evenings "Traditions and art" in Bansko

Promoting the active life of older people in the field of participation in society

One of the initiatives of the Municipality of Bansko, aimed at stimulating the active life of the elderly, is to organize and conduct events of the cultural program of the municipality with the participation of the elderly and the reproduction and transfer of their experience to the younger. Such events are the “Traditions and art” Cultural Evenings, including presentation of the folklore ensembles' activities, the re-creation of forgotten local traditions and crafts, including their presentation to tourists, preparation of Bansko region traditional dishes for culinary exhibitions, as well as other cultural events organized by the Municipality of Bansko and "Nikola Vaptsarov - 1984" Community center.

The events' organization is supported by the Center for Day Care of Adults with Disabilities and the Retiree's Club - Bansko, which provide participation of their members in the events held by the municipality, as well as organize other events aimed at the elderly, such as celebrations on major holidays in compliance with all local traditions and customs, carried and preserved by the older generation, and organizing talks with students from schools to share experiences and tell interesting stories.

Organization:
Municipality of Bansko

Partners:

- "NikolaVaptsarov - 1984"Community center
- Day center for adults with disabilities and Retiree's Club - Bansko
- Bansko Museum complex etc.

Participants:

- About 120 participants from different age groups

Where does it happen?
Municipality of Bansko

„ It is impossible to describe the joy in the eyes of our adult participants when they contact the young showing them forgotten crafts”

Община Банско

The “Traditions and Art” cultural evenings are the biggest attraction for the residents of the municipality, as well as for local and foreign tourists, as they present in an authentic and interesting way demonstrations of Bansko crafts and exhibitions of local authors and craftsmen. A big part of them are elderly people who keep the traditions, crafts and experience. So far, various local craftsmen and artisans have taken part in such demonstrations, presenting woodcarving, crochet, icons of needle carving and needlework, songs by local folk groups, etc. In addition to demonstrations, the artists give open lessons to visitors, revealing various techniques and subtleties in the craft and sharing their experiences with the younger generation.

When and where is it held?

Cultural events with the participation of the elderly are organized annually. There are no age restrictions for participation in cultural events, with about 100-120 people participating in the initiatives, depending on the event. Demonstrations and cultural evenings are held outdoors in front of the building of the Tourist Information Center, Bansko. Folklore concerts are held outdoors on Nikola Vaptsarov Square and in the building of the "Nikola Vaptsarov - 1984" Community center. Part of the program is being carried out in the building of the Bansko Museum Complex.

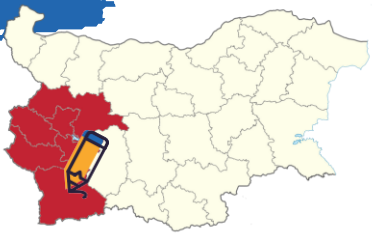
Results and effects on the elderly

The initiatives carried out in the municipality provide the elderly with diversity in their daily lives and with meaning of their free time, as well as the feeling of joy, satisfaction, commitment and usefulness of making contact and passing on their experience and the forgotten local crafts to children and young people in order to continue them.

Project "Agriculture in an urban environment: models of governance for better institutional capacity and social inclusion – AgriGo4Cities“

Promoting the active life of older people in the field of participation in society

Promoting the active life of older people in the field of employment



Organization:
Association of Southwestern Municipalities (SWZO)

Partners:

- Blagoevgrad Municipality
- City Hall of the village of Dabrava
- Association for European Development of the Bulgarian Village
- Pensioner's Clubs on the territory of Blagoevgrad municipality
- "Zornitsa" Day center for children with disabilities
- Local farmers, etc.

Where is it realized?
Blagoevgrad Municipality

Participants:

- Over 150 people with a focus on children with special needs and the elderly

„ Pensioner's Clubs do not use the full potential of the most active and socially engaged members."

The initiative

"Urban Agriculture: Governance Models for Better Institutional Capacity and Social Inclusion - AgriGo4Cities " Project is funded by the first call of the Danube 2014-2020 Transnational Cooperation Program.

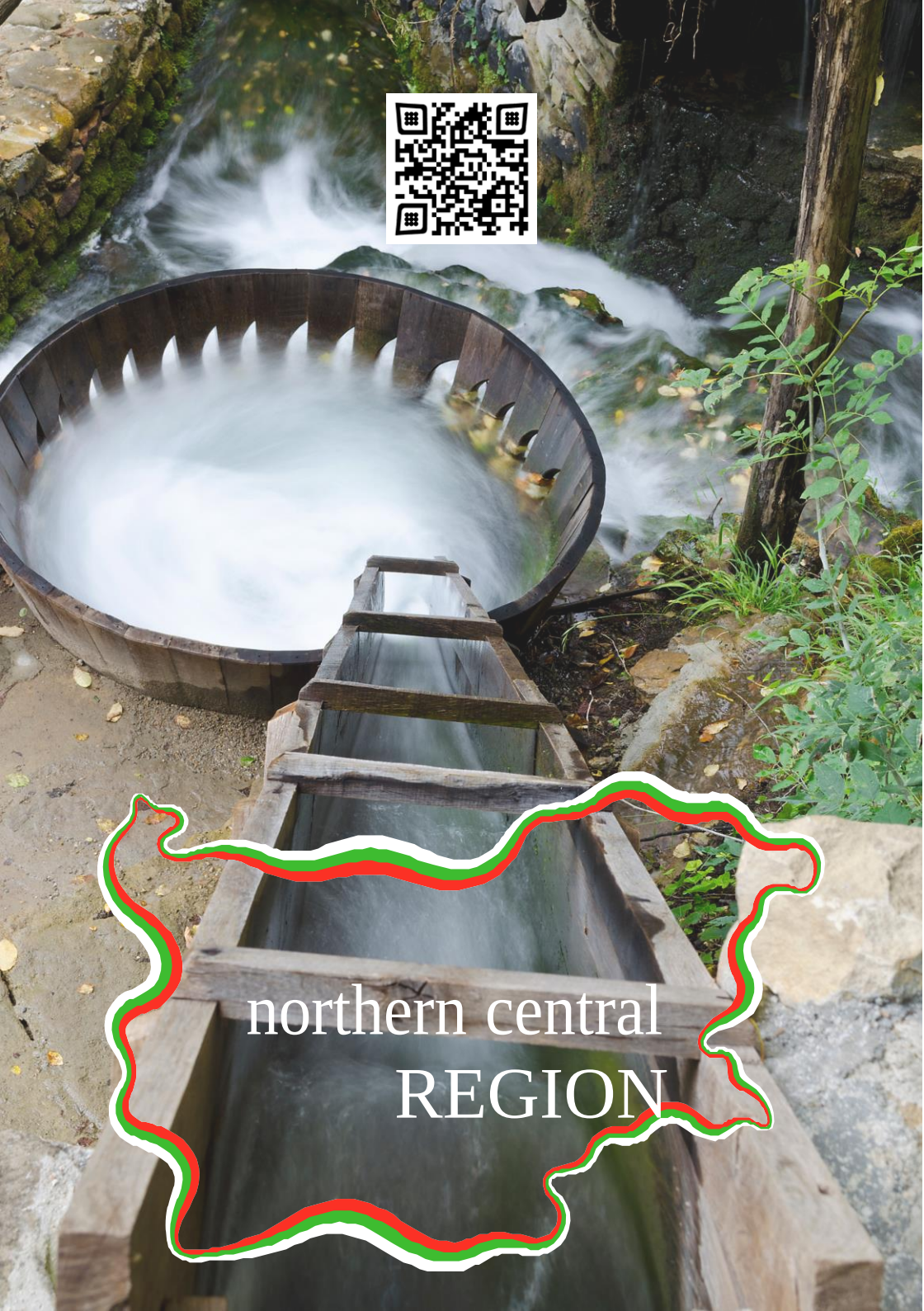
What is it?

Within the project, some of the activities were aimed at the elderly in the municipality of Blagoevgrad as a specific/socially vulnerable target group. The participants were identified through joint activities with the pensioner's clubs on the territory of Blagoevgrad municipality. They were involved in the planning of the local initiative for urban and suburban agriculture, the creation of a local partnership, the development of an action plan and the implementation of pilot initiatives in the suburban area of Blagoevgrad. All target groups of the initiative are local authorities and administrations, vulnerable groups of the local population (elderly people, children with special needs), NGOs and other stakeholders. The initiative is being piloted as part of the project activities and includes

the creation of a suburban garden, planting and caring for fruit bushes, vegetables and trees by young people and adults, educating children with special needs, as well as organizing and conducting an autumn agricultural fair. The children were given the opportunity to plant their own almond tree under the expert guidance of their more experienced “fellow gardeners” from the Seniors' Association. The trees were 'adopted' by the young gardeners, with signs indicating who their adoptive parent was. In this way, children and their families will have the opportunity to visit the garden further to take care of and monitor how their tree grows. The mixed group of gardeners planted also leafy vegetables in pre-prepared raised beds - spinach, various types of lettuce, onions, and strawberries. With the implementation of the initiative, the participating elderly people had the opportunity to pass on their experience and knowledge to children about planting and growing trees, as well as the creation and maintenance of vegetable and fruit gardens. The project also created a network of local producers, as well as the brand "Blagoevgrad - local production", denoting local producers and their autumn production.

When and where does it take place?

The initiatives have started in 2017 and have run for three years. In 2020, given the pandemic situation, the restrictions imposed on public events and the fact that the elderly are at the highest risk, the initiatives are limited to maintaining the created suburban garden. The elderly people who have taken part in the initiative have given an extremely high assessment on the effect of its implementation, as in addition to the possibility of social contacts, support for their personal businesses and the opportunity to grow fruit and vegetables on their own, they appreciate the opportunity to share their knowledge and experience in the field of agriculture and to be mentors of children with special needs.


northern central
REGION

Resource support center “With care and love to the elderly “

Promoting the active life of the elderly in the field of independent living

Creating capacity and favorable environment for active life of the elderly at national and regional level

Organization:
District Council of BRC Rousse

Partners:

- Municipality of Rousse
- RHI Rousse
- Pensioner's clubs in Rousse and the region
- Schools, health facilities, centers for children with special needs in Rousse and in the region
- "Lyuben Karavelov" Rousse Library
- "A. Kanchev " University of Rousse
- BRCY and others..

Participants:

- Over 500 people over the age of 60

„Conducted Mass events and activities of the Resource Center have established a positive image of the elderly in our society and encourage them to participate more actively in civil dialogue to improve the quality of their lives."

The initiative

This initiative is a successful practice of the Bulgarian Red Cross - Rousse and is expressed in the creation and development of the "With care and love for the elderly" Resource Center for Elderly Support , opened on October 1, 2018, in the Club of volunteer - Rousse BRC. The concept of a Resource Center is a possible innovative model for the participation and development of the elderly in creating a fair society for everyone. It is a comprehensive project with a set of activities in support of active longevity, prevention of elderly social exclusion and active use of their potential by attracting participation and development in the long run.

This is an idea of a group of volunteers from the Bulgarian Red Cross Rousse aged over 65, in 2018, who prepare a concept for a project of establishing a Resource Center based on their experience gained from participating in a project of the National Assembly of the Bulgarian Red Cross of supporting the elderly, carried out with the support of the Swiss Red Cross (2009-2015) and based on conducted pieces of training.

The main goal of the Resource
on a wider range of issues, informir
and motivating them to defend them
to organize various events and initi
volunteering among the elderly.

The Resource Center organizes
in 4 areas:

• Consultative and informational;

• Discussative;

• "Let's create goodness" - standing behind certain causes and attracting like-minded people;

• Solidarity between the generations.

In December 2018, a competition for a volunteer initiative was held under the auspices of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria, in which the volunteers from the Resource Center were awarded a diploma.

The resource center develops a variety of activities aimed at stimulating the activity of the elderly in the area through:

• Preparation of volunteers who have expressed their desire to participate through training in the program "Planning future volunteer skills":

a) Organizing meetings with RHI experts, "Social assistance" and "Social activities" Rousse directorates, doctors - specialists in prevention of cardiovascular disease and prevention leading to a healthy lifestyle.

b) Organizing talks in the pensioner's clubs on the topics of active longevity and protection of the rights of the elderly with lecturers from the volunteers of the Resource Center.

c) Organizing daily shifts in the Volunteer Club and a hotline for information to those in need of

support and consultation with a specialist, if necessary.

d) Meeting in the Volunteer Club with a lawyer about the protection of the elderly rights in inheritance and wills. Providing free legal advice.

• Solidarity between the generations:

a) "Teach me, Grandma" - together with the students of 2nd grade A at "Y. Yovkov ” HS, Rousse - a making-martenitsas classes, preparation for the school celebration.

b) Joint organization of the "Baba Marta comes to our school" celebration with children from all grades, support of students from the school "Cyril and Methodius", Semerdzhievo for inclusion in the celebration.

c) Meeting dedicated to the Day of Kindness (November 13) in the Volunteer Club with many attractions and an exhibition of drawings on the good deeds of 2nd-grade A students at "Y. Yovkov ” HS, Rousse.

d) Periodic meetings with children with special needs in the Rehabilitation Center "Medica", Rousse and organizing walks with the participation of volunteers, on the tourist train in the park.

e) Joint actions with the Bulgarian Red Cross (young volunteers) for the provision of first aid in pensioner’s clubs and kindergartens.

f) Visits to the Centers for children with special needs in the villages of Brestovitsa, Mogilino, and Borovo for joint programs with games and entertainment.

• Holding of the festival “Young in Old Age” on May 29 on Alexander Battenberg square. The main goal of the festival is to raise public awareness about the problems of the elderly and to encourage their participation in the civil dialogue for protecting their rights. The festival creates conditions for presenting positive

practices from the life of the elderly in the city and popularizing the activity of the Resource Center for Support of the Elderly of the Rousse Bulgarian Red Cross, for attracting partners and supporters. In general, the festival creates a positive image of the elderly in society and reveals their potential and desire to be useful. The festival takes place on 4 sites (built 4 tents with consultants on various topics and issues by the volunteers of the Resource Center): "The book - the good friend in youth and old age", "Healthy lifestyle", "Create kindness" and " Sports and tourism for a healthy lifestyle" with the participation of 3 sports clubs for gymnastics of the elderly. More than 400 citizens and guests of the municipality of Rousse take part in the festival.

• Pieces of training of the volunteers from the Resource Center for increasing their capacities on various topics, such as discussion of the National Strategy for Active Life of the Elderly (2019-2030), documents from the WHO for declaring the Decade of Aging in Good health, SWOT analysis of the activities of the Resource Center so far and discussion of planning ideas for next year.

• "Create kindness" - one of the modules of the Resource Center, which is aimed at supporting in situ the lonely and needy elderly with information, social support, food packages, etc .; organization of screening examinations in pensioner's clubs; organizing a fundraising campaign for children in need during the Christmas holidays, making their own items marked with their charity messages, etc.

• Parade on the occasion of October 1 (International Day of Older Persons) in the central part of Rousse under the motto "Growing with dignity - an opportunity to be useful to others"

Participants in total were over 400 representatives of the retirement clubs, people aged 65+ from the veteran sports clubs, citizens of Ruse. The aim is to promote the idea that the elderly are an active part of the society in Ruse, that they have the right to participate in various activities in order to live with dignity and have their own demands to improve the quality of their lives.

- Participation in a project supported by the Turkish Red Crescent to support the activities of the Resource Center in Ruse. Within the project, a Collection of materials was developed and published, presenting how the project activities are related to the priorities of the National Strategy for Active Life of the Elderly, as well as a Collection of works reflecting the experiences of the elderly during the pandemic, but kept their desire to do good - "Create good - I give you a hand."
- Organization of a study and preparation of social surveys by 13 volunteers for 18 single people over 70 years of age and living in need of support. Food packages were prepared and taken to their homes.

Study of international practices for active forms of participation of the elderly in the life of the society.

The resource center covers the trained 23 volunteers, but there are new ones in addition to them who are involved during the activities that are carried out. More than 500 people are the ones who took part in the mass events - festivals, parade, discourses and individual meetings in the Volunteer Club and „in the field“. There are no age restrictions, especially in the initiatives related in the tendency „Solidarity between Generations“and „Create Goodness“.

The held mass events and activities of the Resource Center established a positive image of the elderly in our society and encourage them to participate more actively in the civil dialogue to improve the quality of life. Volunteering is becoming a cause that motivates both the old and the younger generation to affirm the national values and traditions, virtues for justice and solidarity in our society.

The stories and verses in the booklet “Create Goodness-I Give You a Hand” published during the pandemic have no art value, but are a small example of the strength of spirit of the older people and their desire the world to be a better place for all people to live. And this is part of the idea of improving the quality of their lives.

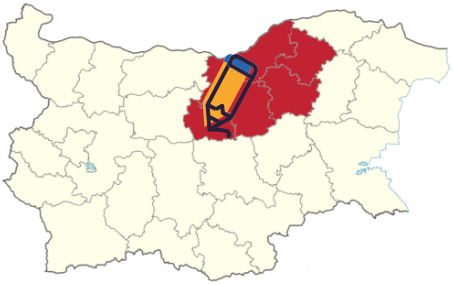
Training throughout life

In addition, “Angel Kanchev”University of Ruse is a co-founder of the international association DANET - Danube Working Network for the Elderly and representatives of educational and training institutions engaged in continuing education and training of the elderly within the program for "Training throughout life ".

Take me in your villag

Promoting the active life of elderly people in the field of participation in the society

Creating capacity and favorable environment for active life of the elderly at national and regional level



The Initiative

The initiative of Gabrovo Municipality "Take me in your village" is unique for Bulgaria. It is connected with the village and the elderly people - grandparents "to rent" accept children and young people - "grandchildren to lend" who live within a week in their homes and help them in the daily care of the household. And the elderly people pass on to them the Bulgarian traditions and customs preserved for generations.

The idea for "Take me in your village" came from a young man from Gabrovo, who in 2012 described his concept for preserving the Bulgarian cultural heritage - folklore, traditions, customs and values in a national competition "My ideas for Bulgaria".

What provoked this idea? Firstly, the problem of villages depopulation in the country. For Gabrovo region, the problem is especially valid, as according to the data, two thirds of the depopulated areas in Bulgaria are in this region. The villages in the municipality of Gabrovo have few inhabitants, mostly elderly people and no functioning schools. There are almost no children and young people. The villages are deserted, and with them the rich cultural heritage, preserved in its most authentic form there, is gradually forgotten and erased.

Organization:
Gabrovo Municipality
Partners:

- Town halls of the villages in which it is organized; community centers

Where is it implemented?

- Gabrovo Municipality

Participants:

- Children and young people up to 29 years of age, elderly people from the villages

Links:
www.priemimenaselo.eu

„ The greatest benefit for the elderly from their participation in "Take me in your village" is emotional. The presence and communication with the young people is priceless for them. Very often these contacts continue after the end of the initiative - "the grandchildren to lend" write letters, send cards and photos to their grandparents "to rent", they hear each other on the phone, dictate cooking recipes

“Take me in your village”gives young people a chance to touch this culture, to get to know it and to preserve it for the generations. Since 2013, the idea of “Take me in your village” has been recognized, developed, financed and implemented by the Municipality of Gabrovo, and with each passing year it is enriched and expanded. By 2020, "Take me in your village" is already being implemented in five areas:

- „ Take me in your village“for young people aged 15-29 from all over the country and from Bulgarian communities abroad;
- „ Take me in your village – Junior“ for children aged 9-14 from all over the country and from Bulgarian communities abroad;
- Day camp "Take me in your village" for children aged 9-14 from Gabrovo;
- „ Take me in your village“ academy for young people aged 15-29 from all over the country and from Bulgarian communities abroad;
- Youth exchange with participants from partner foreign cities for the town of Gabrovo.

Elderly people participating in 'Take me in your village' accept in their homes one or more young people / children, depending on their accommodation options. Grandparents "to rent" are committed to provide a place to sleep and feed their "grandchildren to lend" within 7 days. At the same time, they have to show them and involve them actively in their daily activities - caring for animals, preparing winter food, working in the garden or in the field, cooking and others. The participation of the elderly people is completely voluntary and gratuitous. Both young people and grandparents “to rent” sign a Code of Ethics.

The main goal of "Take me in your village" is to get to know, preserve and promote the Bulgarian living cultural heritage - traditions, customs, folklore, crafts and values, by passing knowledge and experience from the adult to the young generation, in an authentic environment for the Bulgarian culture. The initiative encourages the communication, promotes intergenerational learning and stimulates tolerance, understanding, interaction and the dialogue

between them. Adequate to the local conditions forms and models for preservation and revival of cultural heritage are created, based on voluntary participation and partnership between young people and elderly villagers.

The activities that are implemented within the framework of "Take me in your village" are in several main directions:

- Cultural heritage;
- Folklore traditions;
- Traditional crafts;
- Rural way of life;
- Bulgarian history.

Every year, after the completion of all activities set in “Take me in your village”, the Municipality of Gabrovo organizes a closing event with the participation of grandparents “to rent” and “grandchildren to lend”. The purpose of these events is to present the results of the consecutive edition of the initiative, to reward the most active volunteers - adults and young people, to promote “Take me in your village” and to motivate new participants to get involved.

When does it take place?

The “Take Me in Your Village” initiative is annual. It started in 2013 and until 2019 was held in 7 consecutive years, during the summer months - from June to September. In 2020, the initiative did not take place due to the pandemic situation. By 2019, a total of 16 villages have joined, including three that are not in the municipality of Gabrovo; a total of 393 young people visited the village, and the participated elderly people are over 1000.

The results and effects for the elderly people

Nearly 400 children and young people from all over the country have been given the opportunity to become "grandchildren to lend". For most of them this is the first contact with the village and the traditional rural way of life. Together with their grandparents "to rent", they give a new meaning to the idea of intergenerational continuity and acquire a new sensitivity to the topic “tolerance in the communication with representatives of the older generation”. The benefits for the elderly participants can be summarized in several main directions:

They feel useful and valued

Almost all adult participants have shared that by participating in "Take me in your village "they feel "alive", "young", "useful". They are happy that there are young people who value their knowledge and skills and need them.

They acquire new knowledge and skills

Thanks to their contact with young people, many of the adult participants learn different digital skills - how to use their phone more efficiently, how to work with a computer, to use social networks. Many grandmothers record from their granddaughters “borrowed” recipes from other parts of the country, modern healthy, vegetarian and vegan dishes.

One of the young people - participants had as his mission during his participation in "Take me in your village" to pass on to the elderly his knowledge of herpetology - how to know snakes, not to kill them and to learn more about the benefits of these animals.

In some community centers a preliminary preparation is conducted for welcoming the "grandchildren to lend", in which the grandmothers update their knowledge of the traditions and customs of the village. Elderly people learn many new things about the life of young people in big cities and abroad, learn their language and jargon.

They change their attitudes towards young people

The intensive communication between the generations and their participation in joint activities change the attitudes of some adults towards young people - in "Take me in your village" they find that the young people are educated, curious, hardworking, respect the elderly, appreciate the Bulgarian traditions and customs.

They receive help and support

During their participation in “Take me in your village” the young people provide real help to the adults in the household and to the whole rural community, especially in some harder activities - chopping and arranging wood, cleaning the church in the village, improvment of areas in the village, digging gardens, etc.

They create lasting contacts

Gabrovo Municipality believes that the initiative "Take me in your village" is one of the possible solutions to the modern problems related to the lack of spirituality, the growing distance between generations, between the village and the big city, the distancing of the young people from the land and from our cultural wealth - folklore, traditions, customs and all those things that make us proud to be Bulgarians.

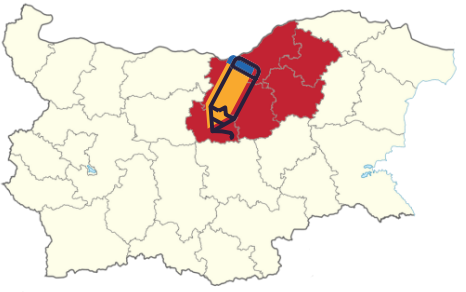
What financial resources are needed?

The “Take Me in Your Village”initiative has an annual budget, which is determined by the number of villages that have expressed a desire to join this year. From 2013 to 2019, the annual funding is between BGN 12,000 and 17,000. The initiative is funded by the Municipality of Gabrovo, and over the years has received financial support from some private companies. In 2018, the initiative received the Pompidou Group European Drug Prevention Prize of the Council of Europe for cooperation in the fight against drug abuse and illegal drug trafficking. The funds from the award are invested in the initiative for the next year.

„ A new chance for social inclusion ”in Lyaskovets Municipality

Promoting the active life of elderly people in the field of participation in the society

Promoting the active life of elderly people in the field of the independent living



The Initiative

The project “A new Chance for Social Inclusion in Lyaskovets Municipality” includes a package of integrated innovative social activities for people with disabilities and people over 65 years of age unable to self-care and upgrades the social services offered by Home Social Patronage - Lyaskovets based on the various dynamic needs of the vulnerable people in meeting basic living needs.

The innovative social activities are provided through the “Mobile Center for Integrated Social Services”. The mobile service is a package of activities aimed at disadvantaged people - people with disabilities and people over 65 years of age unable to self-care, according to their individual needs. The package of services includes health and social services, as well as psychological support from the Home Social Patronage - Lyaskovets.

The established “Laboratory for Social Innovation” guarantees the right of every person to receive quality care and services according to their individual needs.

Organization:
Lyaskovets Municipality

Partners:

- LIG "Lyaskovets - Strazhitsa"
- Home social patronage, Lyaskovets

Where is it implemented?

- Lyaskovets Municipality

Budget

- Around BGN 200 000

Participants

- Over 100 vulnerable people - people with disabilities and people over 65 incapable of self-care

„It is good if financial support can be provided for the implementation of projects related to the social inclusion of the elderly, given the aging of the population, protection of their health, use of health and rehabilitation services and psychological support.“

The laboratory built under the project is equipped with the necessary rehabilitation devices and equipment and a rehabilitation hall. In the separate second premise, occupational therapy and art therapy for group or individual work are conducted, aimed at the social inclusion of people with disabilities. The aim is to overcome social isolation, receive professional support in the care of people with disabilities, deal with family problems and create conditions for full inclusion in the public life.

A "Notification System" has also been developed and implemented, providing an opportunity for the users of the services of the Mobile Center for Integrated Social Services to notify the mobile team in case of a risk of deteriorating health or need for assistance. The notification system resembles an IT catering service provided by special software with the most simplified vision. In order to have access to the Notification System, 20 users are provided with 20 tablets supplied with 20 pcs. internet cards. The provided devices have a specific button / indicator, through which the type of help that the user needs is alerted.

Within 1 year in which it operated, the notification system serviced 48 requests of people in need. For the whole period of the implementation of the project activities 112 vulnerable persons are covered. Territorially, all settlements in the municipality are covered - the town of Lyaskovets and the constituent villages - Merdanya, Dobri Dyal and Dzhulyunitsa. The users of the Mobile Center for Innovative Social Services were 78, and of the Laboratory for Social Innovation - 34.

For the implementation of the project, the Municipality of Lyaskovets has provided specially designated premises located in a one-storey massive building - municipal property. 3 rooms of the building are provided, intended for: a room for the Mobile Center team, a room for art therapy and a rehabilitation hall.

The services are provided by the Municipality of Lyaskovets

through non-profit association LIG "Lyaskovets - Strazhitsa", in implementation of a project under the Operational Program “Human Resources Development” 2014-2020, through the approach “Community-led local development”.

Time for implementation

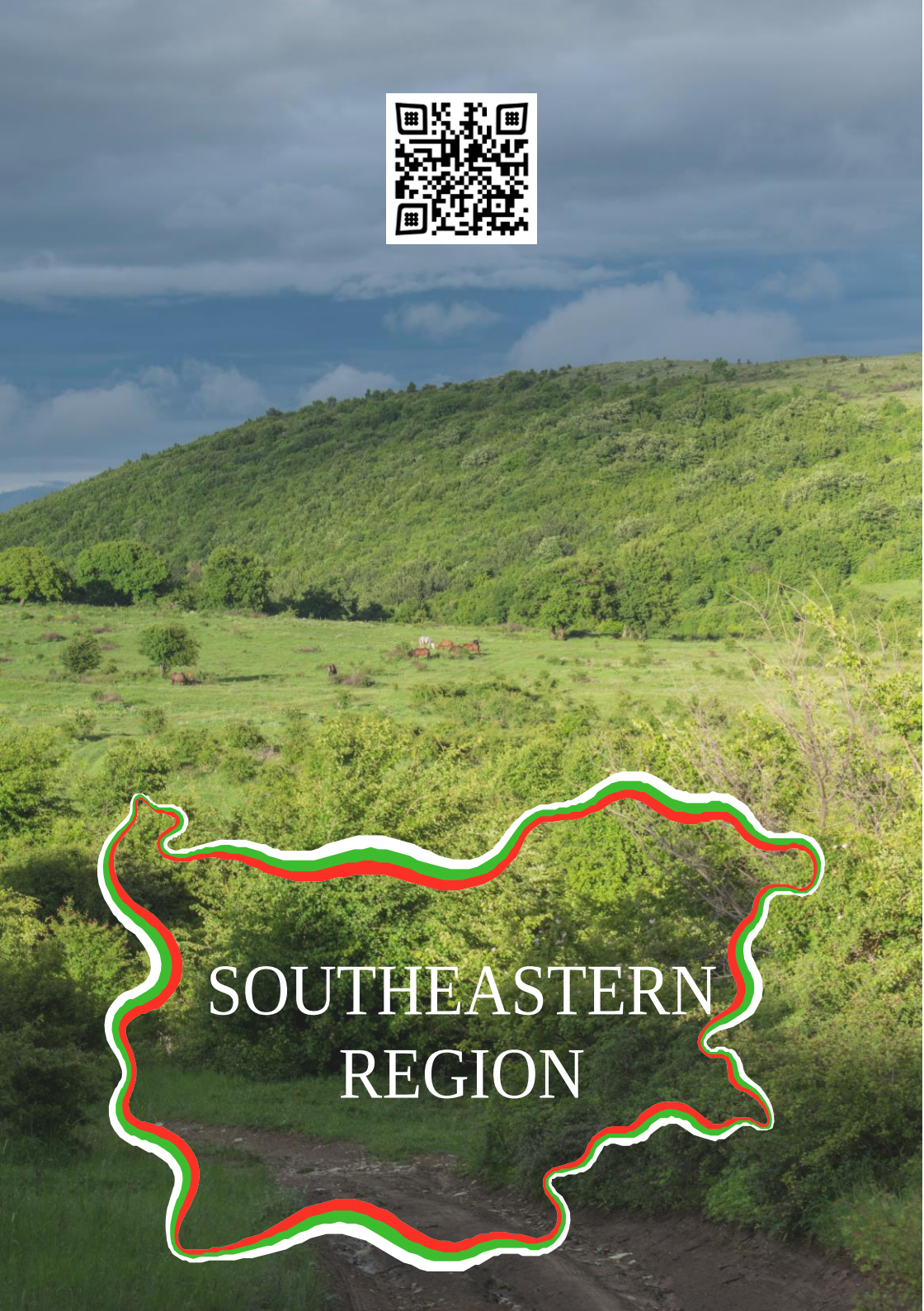
The implementation of the project is within 17 months for the period from August 2018 to December 2019. After the completion of the project activities the initiative has not been renewed.

Achieved effects

The improved and expanded access of persons with disabilities and persons over 65 years of age unable to self-care to use services to the family or close to the family environment, provided in the municipality of Lyaskovets.

Positive effect of the work aimed at people with disabilities. Overcoming social isolation, receiving professional support in caring for people with disabilities, helping to deal with family problems, work aimed at creating conditions for complete social contacts and raising the self-esteem and personal assessment of each vulnerable person in order to actively involve in public life.

Support provided by a rehabilitator that improves the general condition of the participants in the program and has a beneficial effect on improving their skills to deal with everyday problems.


SOUTHEASTERN
REGION

First Spartakiad of the pensioner's clubs

Promoting the active life of older people in the field of participation in society

Organization::
Tundzha Municipality

Partners:

- City Hall of the village of Mezhda
- Zora 1928 Community Center, Mezhda
- pensioner's clubs in the municipality of Tundzha

Where is it realized?

- Tundzha Municipality, Mezhda village

Budget

- About BGN 500, incl. material support

Participants

- Over 60 people of retirement age

"*People of the golden age from the municipality of Tundzha have shown that they are still good, that they have great capabilities, that they are in good physical shape, that they can have fun, that they are not inferior to their grandchildren.*"

ОБЩИНА ТУНДЖА

- The initiative is the first sports day of the pensioner's clubs and is implemented under a project of the Municipality of Tundzha
- "Tundzha Social Platform - Opportunities for Active Inclusion in Small Rural Settlements" under the procedure "Active Inclusion in order to promote equal opportunities, access improve to social and health services and better employability" of the Strategy local development performed by the communities of "MIG - Tundzha"SNC.
- The first sports day of the pensioner's clubs was held at the stadium in the village of Mezhda with the participation of teams of enthusiasts from six of the settlements of the municipality - the village of Drazhevo, the village of Galabintsi, the village of Boyadzhik, the village of Meden Kladenets, the village of Ovchi Kladenets and the hosts - The village of Mezhda. The Games were held in the form of pentathlon. Each of the teams competed with the others in the disciplines:
  - arm wrestling;
  - tug of war;
  - darts;
  - fast walking relay;
  - beating on penalties.

All participants received diplomas and the winners were awarded cups. The ladies from the "The Old Oak" pensioner's club in the village of Mezhda took care of the good mood of the holiday, and a 74-year-old gymnast from the village of Galabintsi stunned the audience with his acrobatic skills and yoga asanas.

The golden age people from Tundzha municipality have shown that they are still good, that they can do a lot, that they are in good physical shape, that they can have fun, that they are not inferior to their grandchildren.

When and where is it held?

The Spartakiad was held as a one-time event on October 23, 2020. 69 people of retirement age take part in it. The initiative, as a part of the project, is aimed at socially vulnerable groups in the community - children and adults at risk, including those with disabilities, as well as their families. As the initiative is socializing, it is admissible, according to the project proposal, to include in it other representatives of the local community - residents outside the target groups of the settlements in the municipality of Tundzha.

The Games were held outdoors, at the stadium in the village of Mezhda, Tundzha municipality.

For the holding of the Games, the municipality of Tundzha provides the necessary material support for the various games (for temporary use), tables and chairs (for temporary use), sound system, diplomas and cups, as well as catering for the participants in the amount of BGN 500.

The financial resources for the implementation of the initiative are provided by the Municipality of Tundzha under the "Social Platform "Tundzha - opportunities for active inclusion of small settlements of rural type" project".

Results and effects on the elderly

The holding of the Games is one of the many activities envisaged under the project to ensure a full-fledged public environment, which will contribute to equal opportunities, participation and activation of socially vulnerable groups in

the community, incl. older people, by involving them in local socializing initiatives. Its implementation leads to diversification of life in the settlements of the municipality and the creation of new contacts among the elderly.

Continuation of the initiative

During the Games, many of the participants expressed a desire for such an event to be held in their locality. In addition, after the publication and broadcasting of information materials about the Games other settlements also have shown interest and desire to participate in such initiatives. Due to the great interest, after the normalization of the situation in the country (caused through COVID-19), the initiative will most likely be multiplied in other settlements of the municipality.

In addition, in the implementation of the project, in each of the settlements of Tundzha municipality, meetings were held between the team and representatives of the local pensioner's club, community center and town hall on a preliminary study over interests and desires in the field of culture, folklore and ethnography. As a result of the exchanged information, socializing initiatives have been identified to meet the interests and needs of the residents of the respective settlement. More than 30 similar events are to be held, within the project, each in a different village of the municipality, which will provide a full-capacity public environment, contributing to equal opportunities, participation and activation of socially vulnerable groups in the community through their inclusion in local socializing initiatives. The events are very diverse - from folklore concerts, through the reproduction of traditions and rituals, celebrations, theater festivals, creative meetings, meetings, culinary holidays, to belote tournaments, all aimed at stimulating the active life of the elderly in the municipality.

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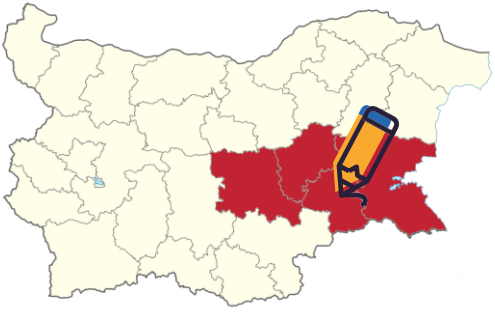
"Karandila sings" national fair - singing of the pensioner's clubs

Promoting the active life of older people in the field of participation in society

Promoting the active life of the elderly in the field of independent living



Organization:
Municipality of Sliven
Partners:
• "Union of Pensioners 2004", Sliven
Where is it realized?
• Municipality of Sliven, Karandila locality
Budget
• Between BGN 2,000 and 3,000, materials and voluntary work
Participants
• About 1,000 people over the age of 65

"Pensioner clubs' members meet several times a week throughout the year in order to conduct rehearsals, which gives them the opportunity to regularly replace the environment of their home with a friendly environment in which they could share problems and joys."

The initiative

The "Karandila sings" fair is a kind of review of the amateur creativity of the pensioner's clubs from all over the country. Each choir performs 2 songs within one day in the Karandila area, which is situated just above the town of Sliven.

The fair is attended mainly by groups at pensioners' clubs from all over the country. According to the number of applications for participation, sometimes teams at community centers are allowed, in which most of the participants are pensioners. However, young people and even children often join the groups.

Every year between 60 and 70 ensembles take part in the fair. Each ensemble has an average of 15 participants. This means that about 1,000 people take part in the fair every year. Most of the participants are over 65 years old. The fair is always held on a Saturday in the summer, which leads to the opportunity to be visited and to increased interest from the audience. Every year he does enjoys about 500 spectators.

ОБЩИНА СЛИВЕН

When and where is it held?

The fair is held every year in August in Karandila, just above Sliven.

In 2020, its 21st edition was to take place, but the fair did not take place due to the COVID-19 situation.

Through the resources of the Municipality of Sliven, the organizing and conducting the festival takes place, namely, they provide mowing, deworming and preparation of the terrain, transport, stage, chairs for the public, waste bins, etc. Between BGN 2,000 and 3,000 are also allocated each year to provide food for the participants, sound system, presenter, advertising materials and souvenirs, medical insurance, etc. The municipality provides all financial and material resources. The management of the "Union of Pensioners - 2004" - Sliven participates with volunteers in the organization.

Results and effects for the elderly

Throughout the year, the ensembles at the pensioner's clubs gather several times a week in order to hold rehearsals, as everyone strives to perform different songs every year and relies on their good preparation. This gives them the opportunity to regularly replace the environment of their home with a friendly environment in which they could share problems and joys.

In order to maximally support them in the preparation, the Municipality provides accompanists according to the respective rehearsal schedule of the individual clubs.

A large number of the groups stay overnight in the hotels and huts of Karandila, which for them is a kind of diversification of everyday life and communication with similar people from all over the country.

Opportunities for development of the initiative

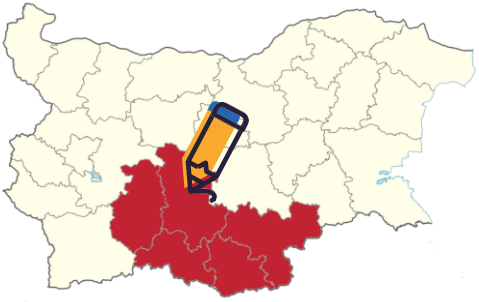
The Municipality of Sliven cultural calendar is very rich and diverse and there are events for all age groups. The fair is included in the calendar in order to provide the opportunity for the elderly to get involved in the cultural life of the city. The idea for the creation of the fair comes from the fact that in all pensioner's clubs there are singing groups that enjoy great interest from the elderly. With regard to the development of the fair and given the great interest in it, to which the location of its conduct also contributes, the inclusion of more ensembles and its organization within two days could be considered.

SOUTHERN
CENTRAL
REGION

The "MuzAtelier - cultural information and creative room" project

Promoting the active life of older people in the field of participation in society

Creating capacity and favorable environment for active life of the elderly at national and regional level



The initiative

The project sets specific goals and activities with which this half-remembered art - sewn lace "kene" - to be preserved and presented in a way adequate to our time. In an age of technology, global communications and countless new attractive ways to gather information, one half-remembered but extremely valuable cultural heritage - sewn lace, will be preserved and developed. Kene is one of the most exquisite laces, created by the hands of Bulgarian women, and in the village of Trud it is known as "zaraflutsi".

Some of the project activities are:

• Study, "Sewn lace, kene or "zaraflutsi". The study includes research and collection of tangible and intangible values and facts, stories, legends about local crafts and specifically sewn lace "Kene" in the village of Trud, their influence on customs, traditions, clothing and folklore in the village and the Maritsa municipality.

Organization:

"Svetlina-1929" Community Center, Trud village, Maritsa municipality Partners:

• Local CWC for volunteers at the "Svetlina-1929" Community Center.

• Municipality of Maritsa

• MIG Maritsa

Budget

• Provided by the State Fund “Agriculture” and the Municipality of Maritsa

Participants

• 12 trainees in atelier-kene and over 10 interviewees and volunteers between 18 and 83 years old

„We are happy that in recent years the interest in Bulgarian embroidery and kene (sewn lace) has grown. This return to the old-time art, native and dear, is revered and recognized beyond the borders of Bulgaria. We, the workers, carry as a gift from our ancestors this treasure, which we are obliged to preserve and pass on to future generations which come after us.“

• Organization of an atelier "Kene" - training of 12 people.

• Creation, furnishing and equipment of "MuzAtelier" - a cultural, information, and creative room for preservation, development, and promotion of cultural heritage and Bulgarian crafts in the village of Trud. It will display the exhibits collected during the study and made during the course. The room will also be used for open history and local history lessons related to traditional crafts in the village of Trud.

The activities cover people of all ages (students, adults, disadvantaged people), with the elderly mainly taking on the role of transmitters of knowledge. The project promotes intergenerational communication and active social activities for the elderly. The age of the participants is between 18 and 83 years, and 12 trainees in the atelier-kene and more than 10 interviewees and volunteers has taken part in the initiative.

The initiative is conducted indoors - pieces of training and meetings in the newly created cultural, information, and creative room, as well as outdoors, namely some of the records on local history research.

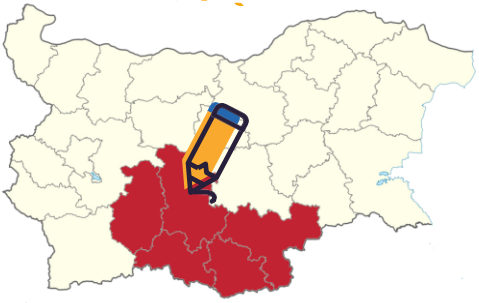
When is it conducted?

The initiative has been running since the beginning of 2020. The COVID-19 regime obstructs, but does not completely stop the activities - interviews and surveys were conducted while observing the measures imposed on the country.

Grand Experts Project - online training courses for elderly

Promoting the active life of older people in the field of participation in society

Creating capacity and favorable environment for active life of the elderly at national and regional level



Organization:

"Lale" Foundation

Partners:

- "Svetlina-1929" Community Center, Trud village, Maritsa municipality
- "Saznanie-1927" Community Center, Dolni Vadin village, Oryahovo municipality
- "Treta vazrast" Foundation, Ruse
- Project partners from Germany, Ireland, Poland and the Netherlands

Budget:

- 26,981 euros

Participants:

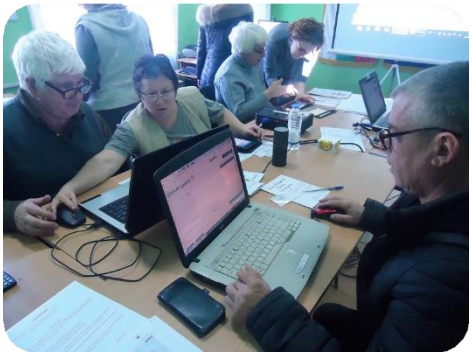
- Nearly 120 people over the age of 55 from all over Bulgaria

"This project made older people feel significant and valued by their children, grandchildren, neighbors, friends and relatives, as well as by strangers, thanks to the opportunity to share their experience and knowledge online."

The initiative

The initiative enables older people to develop digital interactive learning courses and provide them to other adults in a learning platform within the "Grand Experts" project implemented by the "Lale" Foundation with the support of the EU's "Erasmus +" program. The main goal of the project is to provide opportunities to older people to become authors in their field of competence, using new technologies in the development of innovative digital materials for their peers. Digital and pedagogical competencies and the ability to summarize and share our own experiences with other peers represent a special, hitherto unknown opportunity to support active way of living in later age.

Some older people have been trained on how to develop digital interactive training courses themselves, within the project



and how to provide them to other old people in a training platform. In order to ensure the high quality of the created materials, the elderly people went through a pre-training for creating online training content, and multimedia experts helped them during the process of developing the digital learning content of their own courses. New forms of learning and the use of digital technologies further make learning more attractive and support the target group not to lag behind in technological development (digital competence). The aim was also to facilitate access to learning opportunities through Internet-based offerings and to promote inter-regional and European communication and cooperation between older people.

The main activities of the project include:

- Training for creating digital learning content - developing a course and manual for adults who want to become authors of online learning materials. It includes the basics of didactic tools and instructions on how to create digital learning content (learning modules, videos, interactive exercises, etc;

- Creating an innovative learning platform according to the requirements of the elderly themselves, suitable for mobile learning;
- Analysis of the interests and needs of the elderly in relation to the proposed learning topics.

Themes of online modules created by older people are selected and proposed by them and are related to their daily lives and the field in which they have experience. Some of the topics include:
"Dealing with various diseases"; "Advice on providing care for the seriously ill in the family"; "Age-related exercise and nutrition"; "Tips for the personal garden", etc. The developed content was tested and evaluated by at least 20 elderly in each of the project partner countries.

The leading organization of the project is the Institute for Innovation in Learning at the Friedrich-Alexander Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg in Germany, and the project partners are the Lale Foundation in Bulgaria, Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Senioren-Organisationen e.V. in Germany, Dublin City University in Ireland, Foundation for Women's Issues (FJK) in Poland and Art-Age in the Netherlands.

At the national level, the project activities have been implemented with partners "Consciousness-1927" Community center in the village of Dolni Vadin, "Svetlina 1929" in the village of Trud and the Third Age Foundation in Rousse. Included are individual participants from Sofia, Sliven and others.

The project is aimed at people over the age of 55, but the content developed by them is publicly available to anyone who is interested. Nearly 120 people aged 55+ from all over Bulgaria have shown interest in the Grand Experts project. Of these, 72 have undergone training to create digital learning content, and 10 people come from the village of Trud, aged 55-82. 16 of the participants have developed their own online training modules, which are available online and anyone can use them from home at a time convenient to him.

When and where it takes place?

The initiative is conducted within the duration of the project, for a period of 2 years (2017 - 2019). The training of the elderly went through several phases, including live meetings, combined with periods of independent online training and provision of supervision by the "Lale" Foundation. The live pieces of training were held in Sofia, the village of Dolni Vadin, the village of Trud and in Rousse. Several training meetings within the project are held In the library at "Svetlina-1929" Community Center, Trud village. Subsequently, the librarian at the community center in the village has continued to train the elderly to use the electronic platform of the project and, accordingly, to publish materials in their profiles related to their hobbies.

Results and effects for the elderly

The participants excitedly shared at the final event of the project, that it has made them feel significant and highly valued by their children, grandchildren, neighbors, friends and relatives, as well as strangers, thanks to the opportunity to share their experience and knowledge online. No less valuable for them has been the opportunity to get acquainted and meet their peers from all over the country, as well as to learn more (albeit in absentia - via the Internet) about the interests and experiences of older people in other countries involved in the project. Participation in the project and training helped older people to make sense of their free time and to pass on their knowledge and skills in their favorite field. The participants from the village of Trud are active people, but the training under the project helped them to pass on the information about their skills to citizens from all over Europe.

"Dalgoletie" day care center for the elderly in the town of Svilengrad

Promoting the active life of older people in the field of participation in society

Initiatives

Day Care Center for the Elderly (DCCE) "Dalgoletie" (T/N: Dalgoletie means longevity) in Svilengrad is extremely active in organizing and conducting various initiatives to stimulate the active life of the elderly in the municipality, and in recent years has implemented the following activities:

Conducting a computer literacy course for the elderly

Conducting a computer literacy course for the elderly

In 2017, DCCE “Dalgoletie” organized a computer literacy course for its users (over 55 years of age), with the help of students from “Dr. Petar Beron” HS, Svilengrad. During the course, students from the school has trained the elderly people from the center to work with a computer, tablet, phone, as well as to discover and use e-mail and Skype for better communication with relatives and friends. The training lasted from spring to the end of the year, and about 50 users of the center took part in it. The training was held in the hall of DCCE "Dalgoletie", as the day center has the necessary computers, provided at its opening by the Municipality of Svilengrad

Organisation:

"Dalgoletie" DCCE, Svilengrad

Partners:

• Municipality of Svilengrad

• Pensioner's clubs in Svilengrad municipality

Participants:

• Nearly 120 people over the age of 55 from all over Bulgaria

“The aim of the work in our center is to improve effectively the elderly's quality of life and I think that we all succeed together with joint efforts and a strong desire to fulfill this mission.”

and the assistance for training by students was free. After undergoing their training, it is observed that the elderly, participating in the initiative, have a significant improvement in the quality of life.

Creation of two Bulgarian folklore amateur groups of elderly people

Two amateur groups for Bulgarian folklore have been created within the center - women's and men's, and the essence of this initiative is the performance and distribution of Bulgarian folk songs from all folklore areas of the country. The women's group was established in 2016 and the men's group - in 2017, and since their inception until now, rehearsals has been held twice a week in the hall of the day center. All amateurs from both groups are pensioners (17 people in total). The only exceptions are three orchestral musicians who are under retirement age. The activities of the groups and especially trips and participation in events and festivals require funding, which is usually provided by the Municipality of Svilengrad. When creating the folklore groups, it was necessary to provide folk costumes for the amateurs, as they were initially provided by the local community center. Subsequently, they purchased their own costumes for the folklore groups thanks to donations from local business representatives. The amateurs develop their folklore groups with great desire, enthusiasm and tireless work and are satisfied with the results they achieve, as evidenced by the awards, cups and medals with which they return from each concert.

Celebrating holidays by the elderly in the traditional way

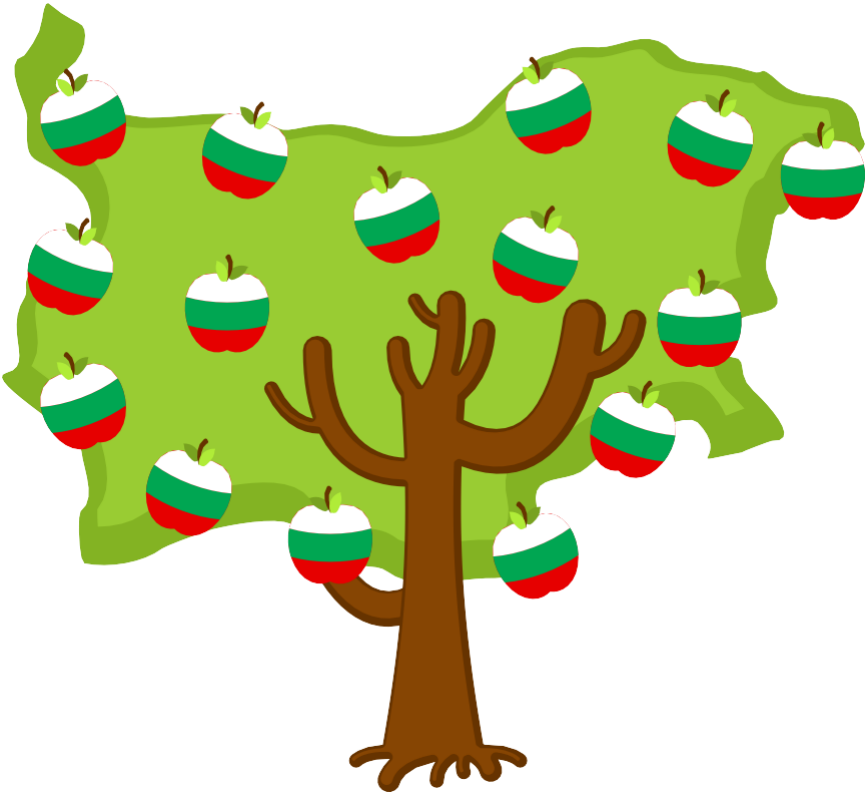
Every year, the members of the day center celebrate various national and local holidays in a traditional way, such as the Trifon Zarezan holiday. The event is usually attended by retirees from the center and from the pensioner's clubs in the municipality. The purpose of this event is the renewal of Bulgarian traditions and in particular - the feast of the vine-growers. During the first year after opening "Dalgoletie" DCCE, its users have planted in the yard of the center vines, which, thanks to their long-term work and cares, have grown and the elderly enjoy the fruits that give birth.

The holiday is celebrated in the traditional way (using ritual foods and attributes like a round loaf decorated with geranium, a copper of wine, a wreath made of vine, etc.), the vines are discarded, a king and queen are elected for the next year, and then the celebration continues in the hall of the center with the participation of about 100 people, where the elderly lift their spirits and diversify their daily lives with fun and good mood. All pensioners participate quite voluntarily and with personal funds in the organization and conduct of the event.

The members of "Dalgoletie" DCCE traditionally celebrate "Babinden" - a holiday in honor of the grandmother (midwife). The ritual on this day is subordinated mainly to the desire to show respect and esteem to the elderly women who have helped women in labor. Men should not attend this purely women's holiday, but nowadays they also want to celebrate. For this purpose, they must be dressed as women and must leave a coin in the baby's prams

"Babinden" is celebrated in the day center, every year, according to an old Bulgarian custom. Participants in the event are all interested retirees, and usually, the hall in the center is filled with celebrants by reaching 100 people. The holiday is organized and conduct with personal donations of the consumers.

"Dalgoletie" DCCE organizes and conducts many other events and activities in order to improve the quality of life of older people and stimulate their participation in society, such as charity campaigns (collecting plastic bottle caps, etc.), charity concerts for different causes, making gifts for different occasions and holidays, incl. to celebrate the "golden wedding" of center members, organizing hikes in the mountains, walks, picnics, events with children and students, competition for Miss and Mr. "Dalgoletie" and many others. All these activities are aimed at diversifying the lives of the elderly in fulfillment of the sentence written in the hall of the center itself that "*Old age should not be lived in mourning, because it is a gift of God.*".



PRACTICES INVOLVING ELDERLY PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY

„National Bulgarian University - third age “ (NBU-TA)

Website: https://nbu3age.org/
Address: Sofia, 77A Hristo Botev blvd.

NBU-TA as a non-governmental organization aims to give meaning to the lives of people aged 55+, support their activity, physical and mental health, update their knowledge in order to use the ability to work, participation in public life, maintaining a high level of awareness through various education programs and stimulating their desire for usefulness.

Classes, discussions, meetings with leading figures in psychology and medicine, lawyers, etc., as well as celebrations of holidays and other events (before COVID-19) are held, which are attended by "students" between 55 and 95 years of age and are free for them.

So far, the work of the association has been funded by its members, but due to the required high costs for the activity, sources of funding and cooperation are constantly sought from institutions, companies and other forms of support, such as free provision of halls for classes.

National Bulgarian University Third Age

„ KNIT WARMTH “

Website: https://www.imanachin.com/izpleti-toplina
Address: Sofia, 7 Madrid blvd., fl. 3

Initiative of the Foundation "There is a way". It has been held since 2012 and is associated with the charitable knitting of hats, scarves, gloves and socks in support of the homeless people.

The main group of volunteer knitters consists of elderly people, who have knitting skills as well as those who want to learn to knit. Knitting sessions, free knitting lessons, a knitting festival are organized. A very important part of the campaign is related to building a connection between the generations - the best knitters among the elderly are also educators of children and young people.

To date, the initiative has reached 7,000 volunteers and 12,000 homeless and socially disadvantaged people.

The campaign is conducted for three months each year at national level - usually from October to December. It is implemented in large and small settlements when possible outdoors. There are people who participate from home or gathered in schools, public places, etc.

The results of the implementation of the initiative are significant. Older people are happy that their skills and knowledge can contribute to causes, they feel significant, respected and satisfied.

Conclusion

This collection was prepared in the period December 2020 - February 2021. During this period our team researched and identified a number of successful European practices for active life of the elderly people, part of which are included in this publication. In addition, our team identified municipalities of different size and degree of economic development in all planning regions of our country, proposing the collection to cover good practices from more than one municipality in a planning region in order to show the diversity of ideas, initiatives and activities implemented to promote the active life of the elderly people in our country.

The collection includes good practices from different Bulgarian municipalities, identified after completed questionnaires, pre-developed for this purpose by our team, and / or conducted interviews by various stakeholders - representatives of municipal administrations, community centers, day care centers for elderly people, local active associations and other organizations involved in and accepted as their mission the organization of various activities and the creation of conditions for understanding the golden years of life of the elderly in their region. Of course, due to time and volume limitations, the collection does not claim to include all initiatives in support of the active life of the elderly, which are implemented in our country at the moment, but it is a collection of some good practices, that we strive to promote among all Bulgarian municipalities in order to inspire and motivate them to expand and diversify their activities in support of the health, social inclusion and understanding of everyday life of the elderly in their territory, and not only.

Main conclusions and recommendations

After the research and interviews conducted, we would like to share some basic conclusions formulated by our team:

● Active organizations / local volunteers who strive through various activities to improve the quality of life of the elderly in our country often suffer from a lack of sufficient funds to fully realize their ideas and aspirations;

● We are glad to find out that there are many active elderly people in the country who have dedicated their golden years in organizing various events to help promote the active life of other elderly people;

● In our country, not enough attention is paid to sports and physical activity among the elderly, as in countries such as the United Kingdom, for example, and exercise is extremely important for maintaining good health and activity of adults for a longer time;

● Still, many of the more interesting and large-scale initiatives aimed at supporting the elderly in various ways, which require a larger budget, have been implemented through projects funded by various European programs.

As a result, we can make the following recommendations in order to motivate more people to get involved in initiatives to promote the active life of our elderly compatriots:

● More active and comprehensive promotion of the National Strategy for Active Life of the Elderly in Bulgaria (2019 - 2030) among the relevant stakeholders - municipal administrations, NGOs, private companies, other organizations and administrations in order to include as many of them as possible in achieving the goals and measures of the strategy by 2030;

● Conducting more meetings and discussions with the elderly people in places in order to identify their main problems and ways of support, as well as their interests, knowledge and skills that could be learned and "used" in various initiatives - for example: knitting, singing, cooking, participating in various sports and many others;

● Stimulating the dialogue between the generations and organizing various performances and events with the participation of young and old for the exchange of experience between them, because each generation is valuable with its knowledge, skills and achievements;

● Active search for various opportunities for financing the ideas for creating opportunities for active life of the elderly on by their initiators - both forms of funding from the municipal budget and national or European programs involved in the cause (for example, cross-border and transnational cooperation programs with our neighboring countries, etc.);

● Promotion of volunteerism, as directed by elderly people to other vulnerable and needy groups (homeless people, children deprived of parental care, etc.) and to the elderly people.

COVID-19 and the initiatives

We would also like to share that the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected the conducting of most of the initiatives described in this collection with traditional annual holding, some of which failed to be fully accomplished in 2020 in implementation of the imposed anti-epidemic measures in the country and in order to take preventive actions to protect the life and health of the elderly, which are one of the most vulnerable to the virus and its impact. Most gatherings, classes, meetings, festivals, fairs, sporting events, trips, the eighth edition of "Take me in your village", trainings and other activities described in the collection with the participation of elderly people were not held in the past year and the people share that they miss the contacts, meetings and communication, and the prolonged social isolation for some can lead to states of depression and despair.

However, some initiatives have adapted their content, such as, for example, instead of the traditional encounter groups and group knitting, "There is a way" foundation has managed to invent special scarf masks for its ultimate beneficiaries - the homeless - to protect them in this difficult for all situation.

Suggestions of the initiators of the practices

In conclusion, we would like to share some of the suggestions, comments and ideas on good initiatives for active living of the elderly people, received during our survey among the stakeholders conducted by our team in order to develop this collection:

„ Our experience shows that the active contact between the young and the old people through work and creativity, exchange of knowledge and experience has an extremely beneficial effect on the elderly. "

"There is a way" foundation, Charity campaign "Knit warmth"

"The initiatives for active life of the elderly people should reflect their interests and capabilities. They have many and diverse interests, knowledge and skills. The question is how we can help them present and share these skills. With the right support / opportunity, they will not only live a full and interesting life, but will benefit the generations of their children and grandchildren. "

"Tulip" foundation

„My personal observations are that the full potential of the most active and socially engaged members is not used in the retirement clubs. Their time and energy can be directed to a more eventful program of any kind. It is important to be stimulated to attract more distant and closed living elderly to the club life."

Association of Southwestern Municipalities

„The main focus is on the social inclusion of the elderly people, given the aging of the population nationwide. Attention needs to be paid to actions taken to protect health, use health and rehabilitation services and provide psychological support for the elderly."

„ Partners for Lyaskovets “ Non-profit association

„Weekly training is a good way not only to maintain the physical activity of the elderly, but also to prevent social exclusion in retirement age. In surveys conducted among the participants in the project, as added value is indicated the social inclusion, opportunities to gather and communicate.“

Aksakovo Municipality

„To enable the elderly to travel and go around the country and abroad at affordable prices. Organizing walks in the mountains in fresh air. Visits to mineral pools for rehabilitation.“

Bansko Municipality

„The training of elderly people can be expanded if a mobile operator is involved as a partner in the service we provide, giving access to the latest technologies and "gadgets" on the market, as they are constantly changing and the specifics of the devices require to be explained in detail to users so that they can work effectively with them. Volunteers need to be included to our activity to participate in the courses and to assist individually to each of the participants.“

“Hristo Botev” Regional Library, Vratsa, trainings for work with mobile devices for people over 55 years.

„Joint celebration of the common national and cross-border holidays (with neighboring countries).“

„Kula – sport for all" sports club

„ In 2020, the community center won a competition for the construction of an Innovative Youth Center, which would have offered both training to young people in MES programs and to elderly in basic computer literacy. We intended to create a working integration between three generations, each of them to feel independent, with increased self-confidence, significant and needed. To our great regret, our idea did not meet with understanding and we were not provided with a hall for equipment, thus the whole community lost, not just the three target groups.”

"Izgrev - 1930" National Community Center, Banichan village, Gotse Delchev Municipality

Last but not least, we would like to share the inspiring words of Ms. Rumyana Radkova, a volunteer at the Resource Center for Support of the Elderly "With care and love for the elderly", BRC - Ruse, given in an interview for the DANET network (Danube Networkers – Neighbors at Work), 2020.

„... That is why even now, as a volunteer in the Bulgarian Red Cross, I work to the best of my ability to help other elderly people. This satisfies me because I know that I am useful with my knowledge and skills, with my contacts. I also have many friends, those from the retirement club, where we strive to fill the daily lives of more than 80 people with content - from walks in the nature, conversations about health and everyday problems to interesting trips to beautiful and interesting places in our country and abroad.

... Old age and retirement are not a problem, but an opportunity to live the rest of your life using your potential of knowledge and skills. But that's not enough! Every day, every opportunity should be used to learn, to look for new ideas and by all means to stand behind causes. But even that is not enough, if you do not attract and you are not followed by other peers, who sometimes gave up dreams, closed in front of the TV series.“