



Good practice

NET4Age-Friendly: International Interdisciplinary Network on Smart Healthy Age-friendly Environments

Working Group: Health

Member States and other countries:

- The network comprises researchers and academic professionals from 39 countries, including 26 EU member states (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden) and 13 non-EU countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Iceland, Israel, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom).
- Additionally, the network has attracted interest from researchers in international partner countries such as the United States, Japan, Georgia, and Ukraine.

Thematic areas: Digital and Physical Connectivity, Quality of Life and Equal Access to Services

Basic project details

Lead organisation: AFEdeMy, Academy on Age-Friendly Environments - Netherlands

Partner organisations: 432 experts across 39 countries globally

Project duration: October 2020 - October 2024



Overview and objectives

NET4Age-Friendly was a European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) Action aimed at establishing an international and interdisciplinary network of researchers and stakeholders to promote smart, healthy, and age-friendly environments (SHAFE). The project focused on fostering awareness, supporting the creation

and implementation of SHAFE, and overcoming fragmentation in research and policy related to age-friendly environments. The main approach of NET4Age-Friendly was the establishment of new local or regional ecosystems or the expansion of existing ones in each European COST country involved, to work on health and well-being in an age-friendly digital world. The ecosystems consisted of citizens, public authorities, businesses, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and research and were supported by four thematic Working Groups, whose final outcomes were obtained in the work of a 5th one, creating a synergised output - the Reference Framework.

The goals of the project included promoting social inclusion, independent living, quality of life and active and healthy ageing in society. Additionally, the project aimed to develop a Reference Framework for Smart Healthy Age-Friendly Environments (SHAFE) with guidelines, standards, and practices. Furthermore, it encouraged knowledge creation and sharing among researchers and promoted the involvement of Early Career Investigators and participants from COST Inclusiveness Target Countries.

Context

The NET4Age-Friendly project aimed to address the fragmentation and critical gaps in creating and implementing smart, healthy, and age-friendly environments. The challenges arose from a lack of interdisciplinary collaboration and stakeholder engagement, insufficient integration of digital solutions in age-friendly environments, and inadequate policies and funding mechanisms to support sustainable and responsive environments for ageing populations. By tackling these issues, the project sought to create more cohesive and effective strategies for promoting social inclusion, independent living, and active and healthy ageing.

Target groups

The project's target groups included researchers, policymakers and stakeholders in health and well-being.

Actions

The project involved a variety of actions aimed at promoting smart, healthy, and age-friendly environments. These actions included establishing and nurturing local or regional ecosystems, hosting regular themed sessions with stakeholders and users' representatives, conducting research, and developing reports on the state-of-the-art in Smart Healthy Age-Friendly Environments (SHAFE), and developing and disseminating a Reference Framework for SHAFE. Additionally, the project organised training schools, workshops, and conferences to further knowledge and collaboration in this field.

Financial allocation

Total budget: EUR 156 000 000

EU co-funding: Yes

Sources of funding: COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology)



Working Group Insights

“NET4Age-Friendly’s development of modules, including business and evaluation models, integrated health and well-being pathways, and user-centred design recommendations, offered practical tools for reforming health and care ecosystems in regions facing population ageing. These resources are focused on creating horizontal policies supporting age-friendly environments, including workplaces, housing, transportation, and public spaces. By promoting improved accessibility and digital connectivity, these modules contribute to enhanced quality of life and more equal access to services for older individuals.

NET4Age-Friendly focused on smart, healthy, and age-friendly environments that have direct relevance for attracting, developing, and retaining talent. By promoting, among others, age-friendly workplaces, the project contributed to closing skills gaps and ensuring the continued integration of experienced professionals. This not only benefits organisations by keeping valuable knowledge and expertise but also improves the quality of life for all generations, including older individuals, by enabling continued engagement and contribution”.

ANDRZEJ KLIMCZUK

PhD, Assistant Professor at SGH Warsaw School of Economics

Results

The project aimed to create inclusive and supportive environments, which could contribute to better job satisfaction and retention among healthcare professionals. The important results achieved by the NET4Age-Friendly project included the creation of a Reference Framework integrating the outcomes of thematic Working Groups, the development of innovative solutions for digital health and age-friendly environments, the establishment of a network of ecosystems promoting health and well-being in an age-friendly digital world.

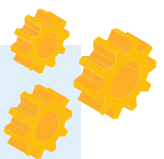


Success factors

The success factors for the NET4Age-Friendly project included the effective establishment of local or regional ecosystems involving citizens, public authorities, businesses, NGOs, and researchers. Support from thematic Working Groups focusing on user-centred design, integrated health pathways, digital solutions, and policy development was also crucial. Additionally, the promotion of knowledge creation and sharing among researchers and stakeholders, along with the involvement of Early Career Investigators and participants from COST Inclusiveness Target Countries, contributed to comprehensive stakeholder engagement and the successful implementation of smart and healthy environments.

Implementation challenges

The key challenges encountered during the implementation of the NET4Age-Friendly project included overcoming fragmentation and gaps in innovation and policy development, ensuring effective collaboration among diverse stakeholders from different sectors and countries, addressing the varying levels of digital literacy and infrastructure across regions, and securing sustainable funding and resources for long-term implementation and scaling of solutions. Additionally, ensuring consistent and high-quality training across different regions and healthcare systems was a significant challenge.



The conclusion of our expert Andrzej Klimczuk, PhD, Assistant Professor at SGH Warsaw School of Economics

“NET4Age-Friendly empowers communities with practical tools and a strong network to build smart, healthy, and inclusive environments—ensuring better accessibility, digital connectivity, and quality of life for all as we age”.

Useful sources

Official website: <https://www.net4age.eu/>

<https://www.afedemy.eu/projects/net4age-friendly/>

<https://www.cost.eu/actions/CA19136/>

Contact

E-mail: secretariat@harnessingtalentplatform.eu

Website: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/communities-and-networks/harnessing-talent-platform_en

