

Bonding

Facilitating intergenerational
solidarity and learning
through building
friendships between
youngsters
and elderly

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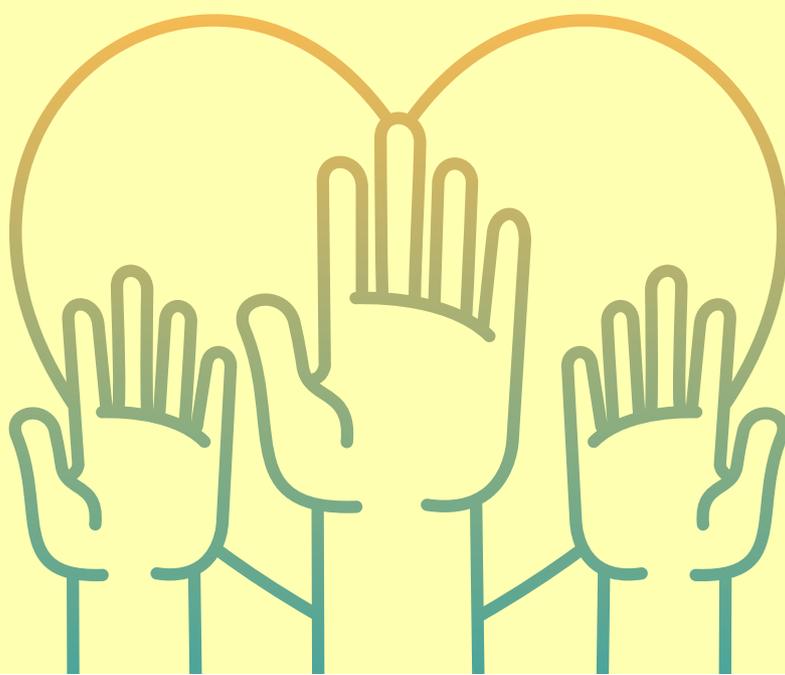


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About the project

The project is funded under the Erasmus+ Programme and it is implemented in 6 countries: Poland, Italy, Spain, Greece, N. Macedonia and Cyprus.

It aims at enhancing the opportunities for young people's civic engagement, through strengthening their competences in designing and conducting innovative volunteering services for elderly.





Mapping the Befriending Landscape

This is the first project result and encompass an in-depth mapping of the good practices in befriending services provided by youth across Europe and lessons learned.

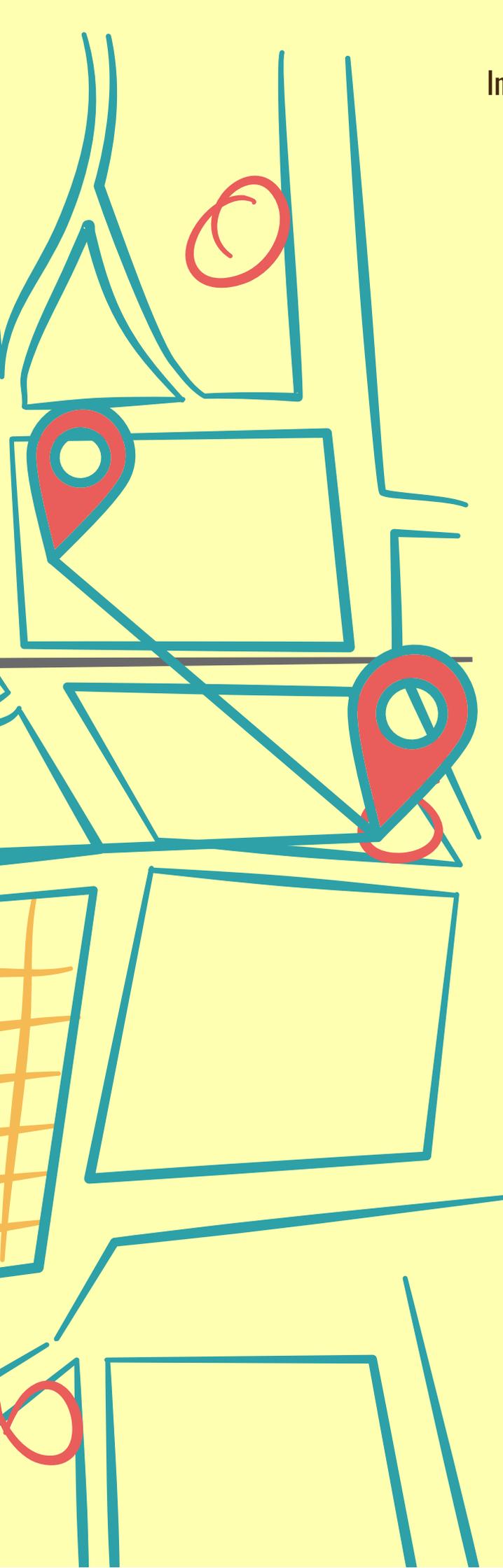
These good practices will act as examples for youth, youth organisations and other organisations providing voluntary services for youth on how they can actually set up and run voluntary befriending services of benefit to the elderly and other vulnerable community groups.

In addition to the added value of this resource in exploring, analysing and presenting the European landscape of befriending services provided by youth, its findings will be key in informing the development of the BONDING e-learning course.

Each of the project partners conducted preliminary research into both public awareness of befriending services and their accessibility, as well as into young people's attitudes towards volunteering and the way in which elderly people perceive this form of receiving support. Depending on the country in which the research was carried out, the reports revealed quite diverse data.

From the information gathered among the partner countries, in Cyprus and Greece respondents had no previous knowledge of befriending services or any similar form of volunteering, nor were they able to find any places where this initiative is carried out. Despite this, however, the idea was of great interest to both target groups and was seen as innovative, necessary and helpful, as well as being of great benefit to both sides. They also expressed their willingness to participate in the BONDING project. In addition, in Greece, participants drew attention to the generation gap and practical issues such as the lack of digital skills among older people, which hinders their participation if befriending services are provided online. Research in Greece also showed that systematic provision and adequate funding of social inclusion and support services for older people is crucial.





In the other partner countries, befriending services, or their similar equivalents, were perceived as known or heard by the respondents, however, despite increasing public awareness there is still a great need to increase interest in this topic.

In Macedonia, all participants were aware of the existence of befriending services, if not in their own country then in other European countries. Some of the participants had personally taken part in similar initiatives and declared great personal benefit from being part of these services. The elderly confessed that it was a time for them to enjoy the company of young volunteers and to be involved in various activities. Young people, on the other hand, agreed that volunteering was an opportunity to gain new knowledge, skills and to become more involved in the community.

In Poland, as much as the young participants had experience of volunteering, they had not yet heard of befriending services. In contrast, among the older participants in the study, although they had not participated in such programmes themselves, two of the three were aware of the existence of this type of support. However, they all agreed that there were not enough services or information about them, especially in the smaller provinces of the country. All also found them to be very useful and helpful, but raised some concerns, such as for example financial or security issues.

#Befriending

In Italy participants also confirmed their knowledge of befriending services. The main activities carried out by the young volunteers for the elderly include shopping for necessities, accompanying them to medical appointments, conducting artistic or cultural workshops and recreational activities.

In Spain, information on already existing befriending services shows that they are becoming increasingly popular and may have gained popularity due to the health crisis associated with Covid-19, during which loneliness and isolation worsened for many people with fewer opportunities. The proposed good practices emphasise that befriending services can only be put into practice with the active participation of volunteers, which also makes them economically and time sustainable. It is not just about dedicating time to people who feel lonely, but above all about investing in the wellbeing of their neighbourhood, creating a network that benefits all its members in the form of learning and mutual support.

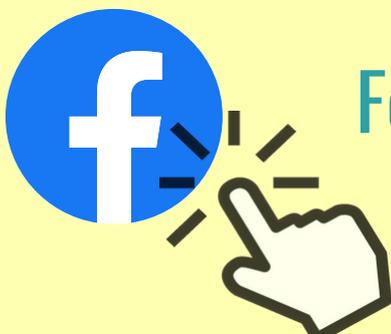
From the information obtained and the statistics carried out, it can be concluded that befriending services among elderly people with the support of young volunteers have great potential. With the appropriate advertising and encouragement of target groups, as well as by spreading awareness of the problem of loneliness and the existence of this type of support services, befriending services can be successfully introduced in this context.

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The project team



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