

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



## Annex F

# National Report



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Prepared by:



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## A.1 Annex F – National Report Template

### 1. INTRODUCTION (*Approx. 200 words*)

Despite the evident increase of the interest and need for befriending services in N. Macedonia there is a very limited number of organizations or institutions that provide such voluntary services for elderly people. Generally, there are service providers that offer care for elderly people, but only by certified and professional caregivers, and not by volunteers. Organizations providing such services include the NEGA CENTER, which is a social enterprise established by Red Cross N. Macedonia and the Association for Development Humanost which offers psycho-social support and other forms of medical care and assistance.

The Day Care Centre for Elderly established by the Red Cross, was the only good practice involving befriending services for elderly on a voluntary basis identified in the county. In the City of Skopje, the Day Care Centre for Elderly has three locations, including in the municipalities of Kisela Voda (Dare Dzambaz centre), Chair and Saraj. The target group of the project are elderly and frail people who live alone or with their spouse and are in of need medical and psycho-social support at their home. Elderly persons are visited in their homes by a caregiver and a volunteer once a week or as needed. The Day Care Centre involves 8 volunteers and 6 caregivers.

### 2. REPORT FROM THE GOOD PRACTICES

#### Good Practice no.1

<b>Title</b>	<i>Day Care Centres for the Elderly</i>
<b>Location</b>	<i>Skopje, N. Macedonia (Dare Dzambaz, Chair, Saraj)</i>
<b>Organisation</b>	<i>Red Cross N. Macedonia</i>
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://ckrm.org.mk/en/home/">https://ckrm.org.mk/en/home/</a>
<b>Overview</b>	<p><b>Description of the good practice</b></p> <p>The Red Cross N. Macedonia has established three Day Care Centres for Elderly within the City of Skopje. The main services provided by the Day Care centres include home visits by caregivers and volunteers once a week or on a need basis.</p> <p><i>The services provided by the volunteers include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conversations and other socialization activities</li> <li>• Grocery shopping</li> <li>• Assistance in buying food products, medicines, etc.</li> <li>• Accompanying the elderly person when going to the doctor, for a walk, etc.</li> <li>• Completion of administrative work</li> </ul> <p><i>The services provided by the caregivers at the home of the elderly include:</i></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measuring blood sugar</li> <li>• Measuring blood pressure</li> <li>• Contacts with the family doctor</li> <li>• Distribution of free medicines</li> <li>• Giving advice on taking therapy</li> <li>• Accompanying the elderly person when going to the doctor</li> </ul> <p><b>Target groups</b> The target group are elderly and frail people who live alone or with their spouse and are in need of medical and psycho-social support at their home, as well as opportunities for socialization and participation in an active aging programme.</p> <p><b>Overall objectives</b> The overall goal of the Day Care Centres for Elderly is the development of extra-institutional care and the provision of health care for the elderly and frail people.</p> <p><i>The specific objectives include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving the quality of life, health and psycho-physical condition of the elderly;</li> <li>• Meeting the health and social needs of the elderly;</li> <li>• Socialization and enrichment of the level of education of the elderly;</li> <li>• Promoting active aging and an active approach to life in old age;</li> <li>• Promotion of volunteering, involvement of citizens in voluntary work in activities of the Programs of the City of Skopje and in the programs of other organizations that offer social services.</li> </ul>
<b>Impact</b>	<p><b>Number of volunteers and beneficiaries involved</b> Each month, over 30 people visit the Day Care Centers for the Elderly and more than 1000 home visits are conducted. The project involves 8 volunteers and 6 caregivers.</p> <p><i>Evaluation data is not available.</i></p>
<b>Innovation</b>	<p><b>Innovative aspect of the practice</b> Although befriending services and the home visits by the volunteers are common in other European countries, in N. Macedonia the example of the Day Care Centre for Elderly is rather something new and innovative within the national context.</p>
<b>Sustainability</b>	<p><b>Financial conditions for continuity</b> The implementation of the project in the City of Skopje began in 2011, with the financial support and experience of the Austrian Red Cross and the Austrian Development Agency.</p> <p>In 2012, the project received support from the City of Skopje and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and the company EVN Macedonia. With the new financial support, the Day Care Centers for the Elderly in Dare Dzambaz and Chair were opened.</p>

	In 2015, with the participation of the Albiz Foundation as a donor, the third Day Care Center for the Elderly in the municipality of Saraj was opened. At the same time, home visits to the elderly living in the municipality of Saraj started. So far, the project has been supported and financed by Sparkasse Bank and the Embassy of the Slovak Republic.
<b>Transferability</b>	<b><i>Other practices that have adapted the mechanisms and tools</i></b> Although the voluntary services provided in the Day Care Centres have a transferability potential they have not been yet replicated by other organizations or in other local contexts.
<b>Additional info</b>	With the aim of ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the staff, volunteers and service users, the Day Care Centres for the Elderly were temporarily closed in the period of 2020 and 2021 during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and re-opened again.

### Good Practice no.2

<b>Title</b>	St Vincent's Centre, Brighton (Tower House)
<b>Location</b>	UK, Brighton
<b>Organisation</b>	St Vincent de Paul Society
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://www.svp.org.uk/">https://www.svp.org.uk/</a>
<b>Overview</b>	<p><b>Description of the good practice</b></p> <p>The Community Support Project of the St Vincent de Paul Society (England &amp; Wales) it is dedicated to helping 120 vulnerable and isolated people over the age of 70 in Brighton and Hove.</p> <p>St Vincent's Brighton is based in a beautiful Edwardian mansion (or commonly known as Tower House) near Preston Park and has a cafe, lounge, kitchen, dining room, art/activities room and an on-site charity shop. It is open four days a week and has a minibus so that guests with mobility issues can be collect.</p> <p><b>Overall objectives</b></p> <p>The goal of the St Vincent's Brighton (Tower House) is to help elderly people who are struggling with isolation and loneliness to come and enjoy being in a safe environment where they can make friends and bond with others.</p>
<b>Impact</b>	

	<p><b>Number of volunteers and beneficiaries involved</b></p> <p>St Vincent's Brighton at a glance has 40 volunteers, 4 part-time staff, 8 weekly activities and 1 in-house chef.</p> <p>The 40 volunteers and in-house chef are working around-the-clock to deliver food parcels provided by Fare Share to the guest during the Covid-19 outbreak. 120 people benefited from a home-cooked meal during the lockdown.</p> <p><b>Level of satisfaction of the befriending services</b></p> <p>Overall the satisfaction level of the guest in the Tower House is on high point. <i>Guests and their family members have expressed their satisfaction of the overall services, the food and the wonderful company. Guests have reported that they much enjoy visiting St Vincent's.</i></p>
<p><b>Innovation</b></p>	<p>The innovative aspect of the practice of St Vincent's Brighton is that it offers a range of stimulating and interactive activities and services, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quizzes, bingo and raffle draws</li> <li>• Mobility sessions</li> <li>• Home cooked lunches</li> <li>• Counselling and advice from experts on topics such as how to avoid scammers to looking after your dental health</li> <li>• Singing for the brain and sing-a-long sessions</li> <li>• Boccia</li> <li>• Brain Gym - physical and mental stimulation for people with dementia</li> <li>• St Vincent's Brighton Charity Fashion Show</li> <li>• Rummikub Club</li> <li>• Painting</li> <li>• Table Tennis</li> <li>• Chair Yoga</li> </ul> <p>During the summer St Vincent's also organizes fun outings for the guest in the specially adapted minibuses.</p> <p>In terms of technological innovation, on the website of the St Vincent's Brighton you can get a contact and registration information and submit a form in order to get in touch with the services provided.</p>
<p><b>Sustainability</b></p>	<p><b>Financial conditions for continuity</b></p> <p>No data was available about the financial condition for continuity of the St Vincent's Brighton (Tower House).</p> <p>However, there are possibilities to donate to the St Vincent's Brighton (Tower House) in order to help the continuity in and make changes in the life of the elderly.</p>
<p><b>Transferability</b></p>	<p><b>Other practices that have adapted the mechanisms and tools</b></p>

	When it comes to other practices that have adapted the same mechanisms and tools, the St Vincent's Brighton (Tower House) was one of the identified befriending services provided for elderly people on a national level. Such services have been replicated by other organizations and institutions around UK. Such services are provided by other non-governmental organisations such as AgeUK, The Befriending Scheme, Befriending Networks etc.
<b>Additional info</b>	The St Vincent's Brighton was temporary closed during the COVID-19 pandemic, but it is now re-opened. Although, some of the guests are still anxious about (or unable to) attend St Vincent's Brighton (Tower House), the volunteers are now allowed to provide home visits. The social distancing, mask wearing measures are still adhered.

### 3. FINDINGS FROM THE INTERVIEWS (Approx. 600-800 words)

#### a) Findings from the interviews with youth

In N.Macedonia, 4 young people (3 female and 1 male) aged between 21 and 24 were interviewed. Three of the participants were university students, while one was employed. Half of the participants had volunteering experience, including with elderly through activities such as visiting elderly and volunteering at vaccination points aimed at this age group. All of them had heard about befriending services, and half knew of some initiatives in the area of this type.

The participants thought that young people can benefit much from befriending elderly, as they can learn from their life experience and receive valuable advice. Developing empathy and a stronger sense of community belonging, were also emphasized - *'The benefits can be that young people can learn something and realize that old age awaits them, and at the same time become aware that they belong to one society and that it is human to help others.'* On the other hand, elderly's low trust in young people and the lack of shared interests were recognized as potential obstacles in the provision of befriending services. In terms of motivational factors for engaging in befriending services for elderly, the participants recommended introducing some form of benefits/rewards for the prospective volunteers, such as *'outings or trips with other volunteers'*. Social and communication skills, empathy, patience and an attitude of openness to learning were considered as the key skills young people need to be able to volunteer with elderly.

The participants suggested that befriending services can become more attractive through awareness raising and dissemination activities aimed at familiarising young people with these kinds of services and motivating them to become volunteers, as well as through engaging schools and youth organizations in the provision of befriending.

All participants stated that they enjoy helping elderly people, with most agreeing that participating in a befriending service for elderly could be a way to learn new things and develop new skills. They shared a view that initiatives of this kind could help them meet new people and socialize, as well as increase their empathy and active listening skills. Three of the participants were strongly interested in learning more about befriending services and taking part in them.

It was suggested that a training curriculum for young people who are interested in befriending elderly should include *'strategies for approaching elderly and communicating with them on the topics that concern them'*, *'basic first aid training'* or *'training for measuring blood pressure, saturation and similar things they need help with'*.

#### b) Findings from the interviews with the elderly

A total of 5 elderly (4 female and 1 male), aged between 65 and 86 took part in the interviews. All of them were retired, with two having a university degree, while the rest a vocational high school degree. Two of the elderly reported that they have used various types of services/support provided by young volunteers, including creative workshops, exercising sessions and lessons on different topics predominantly provided within the premises of the Centre for Elderly at the Red Cross. They exhibited a very high level of satisfaction from their involvement in such activities, as well as from the volunteers' approach and attitude – *"We are very satisfied with the young people in the Center for Elderly, they have a lot of respect for us as seniors and make us feel at home."* The other three participants shared only experiences of isolated encounters with young volunteers, such as through organized visits for blood pressure and blood sugar check-ups.

The majority of the elderly were not familiar with befriending services, while some knew of such services available abroad - *"Yes, I have heard of befriending services for elderly in Sweden, there, they do not leave the elderly on their own and the centers [for elderly] are quite developed."*

Befriending services were considered very beneficial and much needed for elderly. However, the participants thought that there might be considerable obstacles for elderly's involvement, such as the limited access to this group, lack of availability of such services and lack of knowledge of the services that already exist. They were unanimous that there is a lack of intergenerational befriending services and were not familiar with the existence of such services in their local area. Four of the five participants expressed an interest in participating in befriending services and suggested that activities can include *'playing chess', 'chatting with young people', 'exercising and learning activities'*, among other. All of the participants shared that they would prefer that such activities are conducted in person, while some thought that they can be also conducted online or via telephone. Various approaches for elevating elderly's interest in befriending were suggested, including through dissemination of information sheets, informing potential beneficiaries via in-person visits, TV and social media.

All of the participants shared a strong view that befriending can stimulate companionship and conversation, enable elderly new leisure opportunities, help them meet new people and socialize, as well as increase empathy and active listening skills. They were also interested in learning more about befriending and becoming part of a befriending services, but half of the participants did not know where they can identify or find such services in the country.

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS (Approx. 200-300 words)

The availability of befriending services in N. Macedonia is mainly limited to the services provided by the Red Cross within their Day Care Centres for Elderly located in Skopje and through the home visits they offer. Both elderly and youth who have been involved in befriending services exhibited high levels of satisfaction. The research generated strong evidence on the benefits of befriending services for elderly's wellbeing, as they have reported enjoying youth's companionship and the involvement in a diversity of activities. Young people, on the other hand, agreed that volunteering with elderly offers opportunities for learning, skills development and community engagement. Nevertheless, there is much room for awareness raising of the benefits of befriending and fostering intergenerational solidarity, as well as for increasing the scope and availability of such services in the country.

Key policy recommendations for governments, civil society organisations, donors and other interested parties on improving befriending services provided by youth:

- ✓ Conduct extensive awareness raising campaigns to promote the advantages of befriending services to elderly as beneficiaries and youth as volunteers, including through information, guidance and outreach activities;
- ✓ Ensure that access to befriending services is a realistic opportunity for all elderly people, including those with fewer opportunities;

- ✓ Invest in the developing a culture and structure of befriending, including through adequate training resources and support to young people and organisations interested in the provision of such services;
- ✓ Ensure availability of adequate financial resources to enable financial sustainability of the befriending services;
- ✓ Promote the cooperation at national and European level between organisers providing volunteering opportunities for young people, and in particular befriending of elderly.





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