

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



Transnational Report

Mapping the Befriending Landscape



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1. Introduction

The project “BONDING – Facilitating intergenerational solidarity and learning through building friendships between youngsters and elderly” is funded under the Erasmus+ Programme and it is implemented in six countries: Poland, Italy, Spain, Greece, N. Macedonia, and Cyprus. The project aims at enhancing the opportunities for young people’s civic engagement, through strengthening their competences in designing and conducting innovative volunteering services for elderly.

This transnational report - Mapping the Befriending Landscape is a key output produced in the ambit of the project, encompassing both mapping of the good practices in befriending services provided by youth across Europe, and elaboration of the research findings on youth and elderly’s the experiences, views and attitudes related to befriending in the project countries.

The report is primarily aimed at young people, formal or informal associations of young people, youth and other organizations providing youth voluntary services, and policy makers in the social field and researchers that could use it and expand on it. The target audience also includes other stakeholders with an interest in the topic.

Following the brief Introduction, the Transnational report is structured as follows:

Part Two – ‘*Methodology*’ elaborates the research methods employed, including the desk research – identification of good practices in befriending services and key informant interviews, ethical procedures followed and presents data on the research participants.

Part Three – ‘*Research findings*’ presents the analysis of the good practices, followed by a comparative analysis of the interviews findings.

Part Four – ‘*Policy Recommendations*’ summarises the key policy recommendations for governments, civil society organisations, donors and other interested parties on improving befriending services for elderly provided by youth.

The Annexes, include ‘*Annex 1 – Good practices*’ which encompasses detailed description of each of the identified good practices and ‘*Annex 2 – Findings from the interviews per country*’, containing the research findings from the key informant interviews per country.

2. Methodology

The activities for the development of the report included desk research, as well as key informant interviews with elderly and youth. In conducting the desk research and key informant interviews, the partner organizations were guided by a common Research Protocol which set out detailed guidelines, including the research methodology and the needed research and reporting templates.

2.1. Desk research/Good practices identification

Each partner organization identified two good practices in befriending services provided by youth, either in their country or elsewhere in Europe, thus, twelve in total. The good practices include various types of befriending services, such as befriending services that rely on young volunteers whose contribution can be as simple as a weekly telephone call to a beneficiary or extend to regular home visits for a chat and to help with shopping and so on, driving a beneficiary to a social event, or even hosting coffee mornings for groups of beneficiaries.

The identification of good practices was carried out through a desk review, including documents and reports produced by relevant national and international institutions and CSO's, academic literature and media sources.

The elaboration of the good practices included the following key quality indicators and related questions – impact, innovation, sustainability and transferability.

The partner organisations were guided by the definition of the United Nations:

“A good practice is not only a practice that is good, but a practice that has been proven to work well and produce good results and is therefore recommended as a model. It is a successful experience, which has been tested and validated, in the broad sense, which has been repeated and deserves to be shared so that a greater number of people can adopt it.” (Def. of UN on europa.eu)

2.2. Key informant interviews

2.2.1. Research Methods

Non-probability sampling was utilised, thus, partner organisations aimed to include participants with different linkages to the area of focus who can bring to the table different perspectives of understanding. The interview participants were mainly recruited through the partner organisations' existing networks. Some of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, while some online or via telephone. The COVID-19 protection measures in the respective countries were be strictly followed. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes.

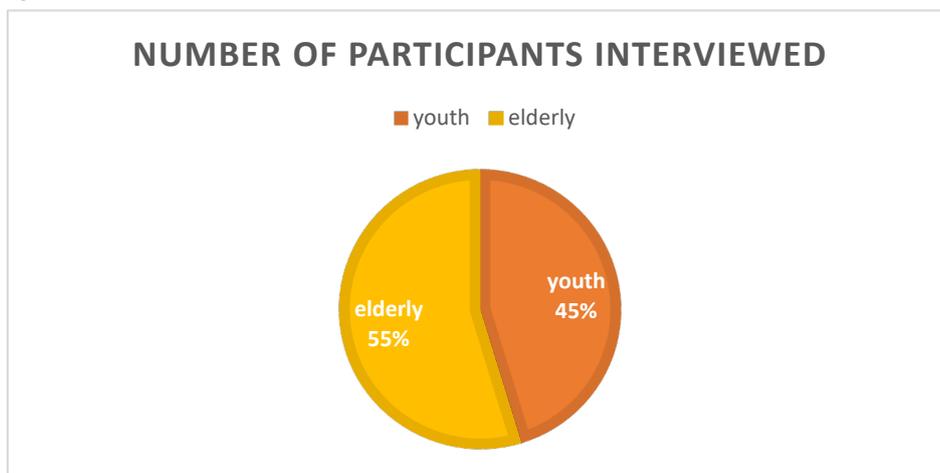
A formal procedure for obtaining informed consent was followed. This included the provision of Information Sheet to potential participants, outlining information on the overall objective of the research, the duration of the interview, their rights related to participation, information on confidentiality, recording, transcription and use of data acquired, as well as a Consent Form which the participants signed before the interviews. Besides obtaining written consent, before the beginning of the interviews, the participants were once again explained the interviewing, their rights and other aspects of the Information sheet and Consent form.

The interviews were recorded via audio taping or by taking written notes. Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed. For the purpose of ensuring anonymity, neither participants' names, nor identifiable characteristics were not used in the transcripts or the Transnational Report. The raw data (audio recordings and written notes) and transcripts were kept separate from identifying information, while all information collected were securely stored on password-protected computers, ensuring confidentiality. Audio recordings were deleted after completing the transcription. All other raw data were destroyed after the completion of the Transnational Report.

2.2.2. Research participants

Overall, 53 participants were interviewed, including 24 young people and 29 elderly. The percentages of youth and elderly that took part in the interviews across all countries are illustrated in the pie chart (Figure 1.) below.

Figure 1.



Youth participants

Among the 24 young people, 9 were males and 15 females, within an age range between 20 to 30 years old. The number of participants that took part in the interviews, and their gender is illustrated precisely in the bar charts per country below. In *Figure 2*, the horizontal axis represents the countries; the vertical axis represents the number of male and female participants. *Figure 3*, represents the highest education level of the youth participants. The horizontal axis exhibits the number of participants and their educational level; the vertical axis the countries.

Figure 2.

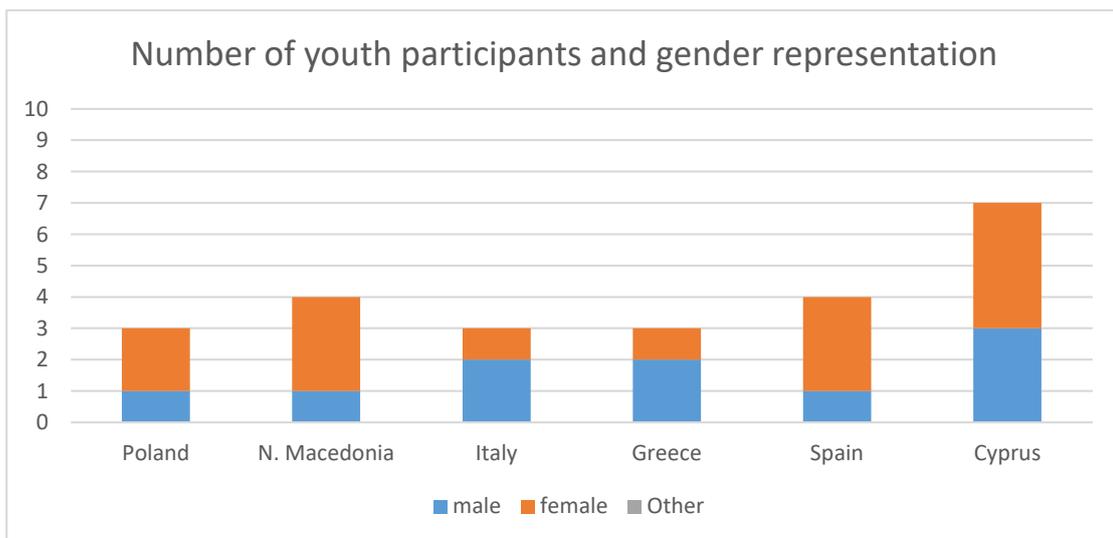
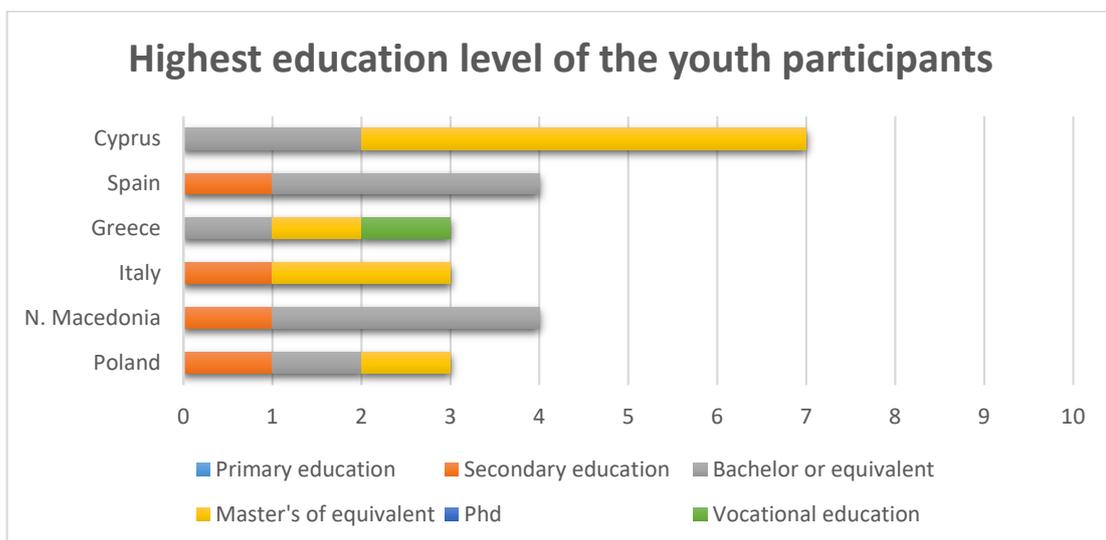


Figure 3.



Elderly participants

Among the 29 elderly people, 9 were males and 20 females, within an age range between 63 to 88 years old. The number of elderly participants that took part in the interviews, and their gender is illustrated in the bar chart per country below. In *Figure 4*, the horizontal axis represents the countries, while the vertical axis represents the number of male and female participants per country. *Figure 5* presents the highest education level of the elderly participants. The horizontal axis exhibits the number of participants and their educational level, while the vertical one the countries.

Figure 4.

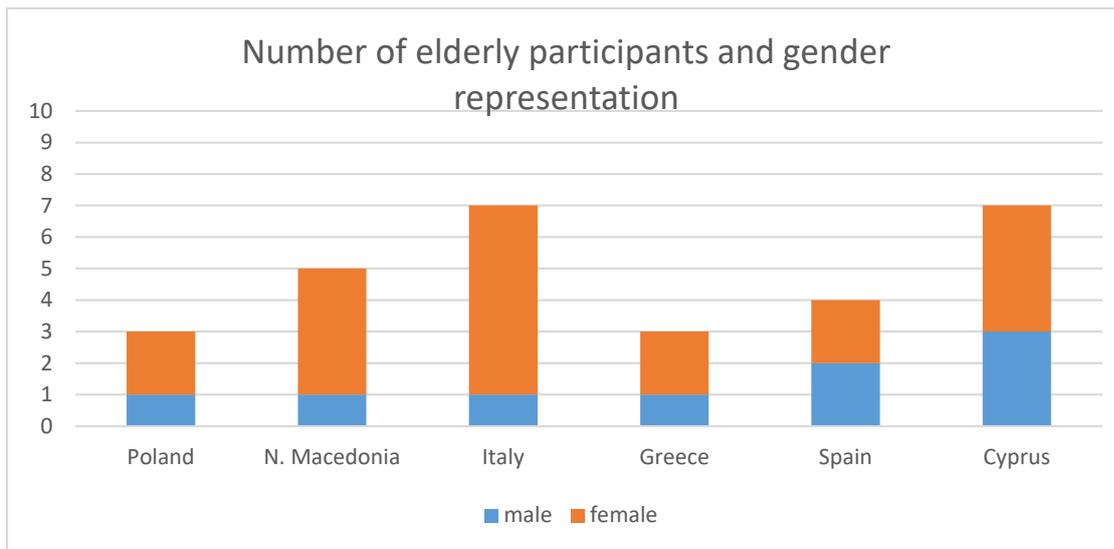
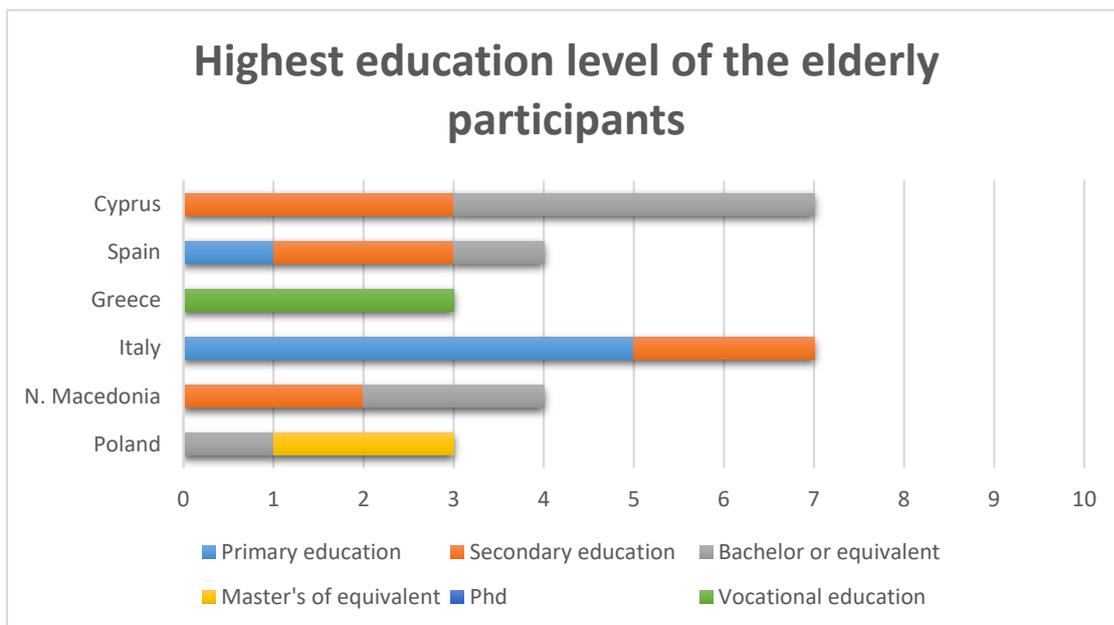


Figure 5.



3. Research findings

3.1. Good practices overview & analysis

3.1.1. Good practices thematic overview

The analysis of the identified good practices in befriending services demonstrated that most of them share similar goals, such as improving intergenerational bonds, strengthening the support for elderly, preventing experiences of loneliness and isolation or promoting socialization for elderly.

To facilitate a better comparative overview, the practices were classified in four categories:

- i) projects/services primarily related to the provision of home visits or care within day care centers;
- ii) projects/services that focus on regenerating the neighbourhoods;
- iii) projects/services promoting socialization for elderly; and
- iv) projects/services providing virtual companionship for elderly.

The charts below illustrate the four categories and the projects/services which were identified under each category.

Provision of home visits or care within day care centres	Regenerating the neighborhoods	Promoting socialization for elderly	Promoting virtual companionship for elderly
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Friendships at Every Age"</i> - Greece • <i>"You help me live (obedience)"</i> - Poland • <i>"Day care centres for elderly & home visits"</i> - N. Macedonia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Barrios Amigos"</i> - Spain • <i>"Madrid Vecina"</i> - Spain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Fragile Elderly People"</i> - Italy • <i>"The intergenerational support: an opportunity for young and elderly people to stay together"</i> - Italy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Online Companionship for Elderly"</i> - Greece • <i>"SeniorApp"</i> - Poland

i) Provision of home visits or care within day care centres

Provision of home visits or care within day care centres by volunteers was a practice identified in most of the countries. Such practices, include for example the programme *"Friendship at Every Age"* in Greece. This programme seeks to decrease social isolation and loneliness among older people through human contact and bonding. Additional aims of the programme include strengthening the older people's self-confidence, putting their needs and problems in the spotlight, and promoting volunteering in the country. The programme involves groups of volunteers that operate at a local community-neighbourhood level, providing support to older people, such as weekly telephone communication or home visits and collective activities, events etc. Within the programme's framework, small groups of volunteers who are connected with older people are supported to develop befriending relationships.

Similarly, the project *"You help me live (obedience)"*, implemented by the Association Little Brother in Poland, offers accompanying voluntary service consisting of regular visits by volunteers to the homes of the residents of the organisation Little Brothers of the Poor, through which a relationship based on friendship and trust is built between the volunteer and the lonely senior. Hundreds of volunteers take part in the programme, giving seniors support and a sense of security every day.

A practice that encompasses provision of home visits and care within day care centres was likewise identified in N. Macedonia. Within the project *"Day care centres for elderly & home visits"*, the Red Cross organisation has established three Day Care Centres for Elderly within the City of Skopje. The main services provided include home visits by caregivers and volunteers once a week or on a need basis. The services provided by the volunteers include, conversations and other socialization activities, grocery shopping, assistance in buying food products, medicines, accompanying the elderly person when going to the doctor, for a walk, completion of administrative work etc.

ii) Regenerating the neighborhood for the elderly

Both identified practices in Spain - *"Barrios Amigos"* and *"Madrid Vecina"* work primarily on regenerating the neighborhoods to prevent elderly's loneliness and social exclusion. The project *"Barrios Amigos"*, ("Friendly neighbourhoods" in English), aims to create a network of friendships in the neighbourhoods of elderly, and establish cooperation with nearby resources and organizations. In order to increase the impact and reception among the target group, regular social events are also organized in the neighbourhoods.

The project *"Madrid Vecina"*, promoted by the Spanish NGO "Grandes Amigos" in collaboration with the Madrid City Council seeks to improve the well-being and health of the elderly by regenerating neighbourhood ties and involving the whole neighbourhood to detect and prevent loneliness. This project strives to make elderly feel accompanied and supported in whatever they need, and it is open for all the neighborhood members. It also includes informing elderly about the different options for companionship, socialisation and support available, such as volunteers, neighbourhood associations, social care, municipal health centres, etc.

iii) Promoting socialization for elderly

Practices that offer socialization opportunities for elderly were also common. Such practices entail the project *"Fragile Elderly People" implemented Anziani e non solo* in Italy. The project aims to identify fragile people over 75 years old who live alone or with another person over 75 in a critical town's district, examine their needs and difficulties and promote socialization, and social participation. The youth who belong to the voluntary association, called *Giovani per Carpi*, coordinated by *Anziani e Non solo*, interviewed Belgrado Street's fragile elderly people in order to identify their needs. Then they organized educational and informational meetings for the elderly who lived in "Belgrado Street".

The project *"Il sostegno tra generazioni: un'occasione per giovani ed Anziani di stare insieme (English: "The intergenerational support: an opportunity for young and elderly people to stay together")* in Italy operates similarly. As part of the project young people organize educational and recreational activities (e.g., dancing, bingo) by involving fragile people in the activities. This project encompasses four different elderly's structures, each comprised of two young volunteers. The young volunteers who work in the Elderly's Services in Mestre and Marghera and in the Services Center IPAV support the realization of the welfare programs of the elderly people who live in their homes. They buy basic necessity products

for elderly people, assist them in handling bureaucratic paperwork, promote and support their access to the services and organize recreational activities for them.

iv) Virtual companionship for elderly

Practices which focus on distant befriending, for which there has been an increased demand since the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, were also identified. Such practices include the Greek *“Online Companionship for Elderly”* in Greece and *“SeniorApp”* in Poland. *“Online Companionship for Elderly”* is aimed at vulnerable people over 60 years old. The programme involves the creation of virtual companionship and discussion groups that seek to break the isolation and feelings of loneliness experienced by older people during this period, especially for those without relatives.

Similarly, the *“SeniorApp”* web-based platform and mobile application designed for all people in need of assistance and their families, looking for support in care and matters of everyday life. This platform strived to use technology as a tool for countering social exclusion and helping people in need by implementing the idea of corporate social responsibility. The project was inspired by personal experience in caring for people in need of help.

3.1.2. Good practices analysis per indicators

The elaboration of the good practices included the following guiding questions under each of the four analysed indicators:

i) Impact	ii) Innovation	iii) Sustainability	iv) Transferability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •How many volunteers and beneficiaries have been involved in the befriending service? What has been their level of satisfaction of the befriending services? What has been the outcome of evaluation conducted, if any? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •What are the main characteristics of the practice that are innovative? In which area lies the innovative aspect and why (e.g., social innovation, technological innovation)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Whether the practice enjoys the technical, human and financial conditions to ensure its continuity over time? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Whether the practice has mechanisms and tools in place to enable other organizations to adapt it? Has it been replicated with positive results in other organizations?

i) Impact

Overall, the participation level of youth engaged in befriending services differs between the countries and projects. The identified practices that have high level of youth engagement and participation in befriending services were identified as part of the Spanish organization “*Amigos de los Mayores*” where according to the 2020 Annual Report, they provided support to 2,709 elderly people by engaging a total 2,689 volunteers.

Moreover, high level of youth engaged in befriending services was identified within the project “*Madrid Vecina*” in Spain where around 1500 volunteers supported 1200 elderly during the COVID-19 pandemic, while in Poland over 500 volunteers become helpers and friends of the elderly as part of the organization Little Brothers of the Poor. In the other identified practices, the participation level of youth in befriending services is significantly lower.

ii) Innovation

In general, the innovation aspect in most of the other practices is mainly based on accompanying volunteerism, i.e., visits by befrienders to the homes of lonely seniors by making volunteering available to everyone. Setting tools to involve entire neighbourhood by engaging people to easily participate in different ways in the project was another important innovative aspect in some of the identified practices.

A practice with innovation aspect related to the use of technology is the web-platform “*Senior App*”. “*SeniorApp*” is a web-based platform and mobile application designed for all people in need of assistance and their families, looking for support in care and matters of everyday life. The web-based platform and mobile application have been widely praised by international experts and partners for their potential in building a community around people who need support in their daily lives in everyday life.

iii) Sustainability

The sustainability aspect differs between most of the identified projects and practices. Some of the projects do not incorporate replication opportunities or longer-term continuation opportunities. Most of the practices are project-based with an exception of the Day Care Centres where in most of the countries the practices are long-term projects supported by the government, such as the example of services established by the Red Cross.

iv) Transferability

There are identified practices that have been successfully replicated, such as the project “*Progetto Fragili/ Via Belgrado (Project Fragile Elderly People/ Belgrado Street)*”. In light of the positive results of the piloting projects on Belgrado Streets, the local administration has decided to support the extension of it. Similarly, in Spain where the Spanish Federation “Amigos de los Mayores” decided to set up this similar service as “*Barrios Amigos*” in Zaragoza to complement other supporting activities conducted by the organisation, offering an alternative to traditional volunteering and allowing other forms of citizen participation.

In general, most of the practices can be applied in any country and community since volunteering is widely available and flexible tool for bringing changes in the society. However, although most of the befriending services can be easily adapted and have a transferability potential, their replication often lacks behind.

3.2. Summary of the findings from the key informant interviews

3.2.1. Summary of key informant interviews with youth participants

Generally, almost all of the youth participants had some kind of voluntary experience and some of them have been part of befriending services or have participated in activities that include elderly. Some of the participants have heard about ‘befriending services’ before, whereas other participants were unfamiliar with the term but once given the definition, stated that they knew of some initiatives in the area of this type.

Participants across countries agreed that youth can benefit a lot from befriending services. Some of the participants stated that a connection with an elderly person offers young people the opportunity to learn from a different but close culture, taking cues from a different lifestyle and bringing them up to date with modern life. Other participants emphasized the development of empathy and a stronger sense of community belonging, were also emphasized by some youth participants. Concerning other benefits of participating in befriending services, participants highlighted that the mere development of a befriending relationship is a significant benefit and added that it helps young people develop qualities and traits like respect and appreciation. Also, older people pass on their knowledge and experience to the younger people.

According to the research participants, the interpersonal skills needed to be part of befriending services are emotional intelligence, patience, empathy, respect, sensitivity, sense of humour and positive attitude but also flexibility, adaptability and the willingness to listen. Some held a view that being a befriender does not require any special skills, it is enough to be willing to help and be aware of the mutual benefits. Others, emphasised interpersonal skills, such as kindness, friendliness, politeness, openness, and talkativeness.

Young people thought that among the greatest difficulties in involving older people in befriending services is admitting to themselves that they are in a situation where they can no longer rely only on themselves and need help, the fear of being misunderstood, as well as a lack of awareness about the options of receiving help. Others have emphasized that the main difficulty may be the fact that the elderly people sometimes believe that the things of today's 'young world' are not for them (e.g., smartphones, the Internet, home banking, digital identity, etc.), and, thus they might not share common interests with the young volunteers.

Young people's suggestions for making befriending services more attractive include:

- conducting awareness raising and dissemination activities aimed at familiarizing young people with these kinds of services and motivating them to become volunteers;
- engagement of schools and youth organizations in the provision of befriending;
- advertisement of befriending services in youth centers and universities but also on social media.

There were many suggestions for the training curriculum for young people interested in befriending elderly. The thematic areas proposed by the participants, included *'how to take care of an elderly person'*, *'communication skills'*, *'hygiene management in the elderly and management of emotions'*. Others mentioned that it would be useful to have a training curriculum that deals with *'elements of adult psychology'*, *'the pathologies of old age (general geriatric pathologies)'*, *'the emotional impact that the pathology may have on the person and his/her family'*, *'active listening techniques'*, *'information on the historical-cultural context'*, and *'elements regarding possible rigidities' (elderliness bias in order to be able to deal with them in the best possible way)*. Some participants also suggested that such a training curriculum 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'*.

3.2.2. Summary of key informant interviews with the elderly participants

The majority of the elderly were not familiar with befriending services, while some of the participants have heard about these services and knew some specific initiatives in the area focus on promoting the relationship between young volunteers and older people.

Generally, 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. Participants also recognized multiple benefits in befriending services, including companionship, dialogue, psychological uplifting, the connection with another person, the exchange of experiences, and mutual learning. The intergenerational relationship, the exchange of knowledge, interests and life stories was something that most of the elderly participants agreed that will be an asset.

Some of the elderly participants mentioned that most of the seniors are not used to be interfacing with youth and that might be at first challenging since there is a gap in language and communication. For other obstacles, a serious one may be mobility problems for older people, boredom, lack of motivation and many obligations, such as taking care of their grandchildren. A significant challenge is the lack of digital skills that could hinder online participation and last but not least, the generation gap.

Most of the elderly respondents stated that they would prefer face to face communication with the youth but would not mind to chat via the internet or telephone either. However, some participants thought that communication over the internet would be more accessible and convenient.

Most of the elderly participants stated that they would be interested in participating and engaging in activities such as:

- Visits to museums, theatre, shows or exhibitions
- Excursions, trips or walks in nature
- Playing chess, cards, bingo
- Exercising and learning activities
- Teaching knitting and crocheting
- Sharing meals and recipes
- Discussing news and current events

4. Policy recommendations

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, in order to develop a structured support network;
- ✓ Provide spaces and milieu that are dedicated to the elderly people, in which they can have the possibility to meet another people and socialize with them in a safety and comfortable environment.

Annexes

Annex 1: Good practices

Title	<i>Day Care Centres for the Elderly</i>
Location	<i>Skopje, N. Macedonia (Dare Dzambaz, Chair, Saraj)</i>
Organisation	<i>Red Cross N. Macedonia</i>
Website	https://ckrm.org.mk/en/home/
Overview	<p>Description of the good practice</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"> • Conversations and other socialization activities • Grocery shopping • Assistance in buying food products, medicines, etc. • Accompanying the elderly person when going to the doctor, for a walk, etc. • Completion of administrative work <p><i>The services provided by the caregivers at the home of the elderly include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measuring blood sugar • Measuring blood pressure • Contacts with the family doctor • Distribution of free medicines • Giving advice on taking therapy • Accompanying the elderly person when going to the doctor <p>Target groups</p> <p>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>Overall objectives</p> <p>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"> • Improving the quality of life, health and psycho-physical condition of the elderly; • Meeting the health and social needs of the elderly; • Socialization and enrichment of the level of education of the elderly;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting active aging and an active approach to life in old age; • 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.
Impact	<p><i>Number of volunteers and beneficiaries involved</i> 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>
Innovation	<p><i>Innovative aspect of the practice</i> 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>
Sustainability	<p><i>Financial conditions for continuity</i> 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> <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.</p>
Transferability	<p><i>Other practices that have adapted the mechanisms and tools</i> 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.</p>
Additional info	<p>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.</p>

Title	St Vincent's Centre, Brighton (Tower House)
Location	UK, Brighton
Organisation	St Vincent de Paul Society
Website	https://www.svp.org.uk/
Overview	<p>Description of the good practice</p> <p>The Community Support Project of the St Vincent de Paul Society (England & 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>Overall objectives</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>
Impact	<p>Number of volunteers and beneficiaries involved</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>Level of satisfaction of the befriending services</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>
Innovation	<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"> • Quizzes, bingo and raffle draws

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobility sessions • Home cooked lunches • Counselling and advice from experts on topics such as how to avoid scammers to looking after your dental health • Singing for the brain and sing-a-long sessions • Boccia • Brain Gym - physical and mental stimulation for people with dementia • St Vincent's Brighton Charity Fashion Show • Rummikub Club • Painting • Table Tennis • Chair Yoga <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>
Sustainability	<p><i>Financial conditions for continuity</i></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>
Transferability	<p><i>Other practices that have adapted the mechanisms and tools</i></p> <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.</p>
Additional info	<p>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.</p>

Title	<i>"Barrios Amigos"</i> (Friendly neighbourhood)
Location	Spain, Zaragoza
Organisation	Fundacion <i>"Amigos de los Mayores"</i> (Friends of the Elderly)
Website	www.barriosamigos.org
Overview	<p>The work of the organisation focuses on preventing loneliness and social exclusion of older people. The project <i>"Barrios Amigos"</i>, which in English translation is "friendly neighbourhoods", aims to fulfil the organizations mission by creating a network of friendships in the neighbourhoods of elderly by establishing cooperation with nearby resources and organizations. The project has a twofold objectives: on the one hand to offer support to elderly people, on the other hand, to restore neighbourhood links by putting the elderly at the heart of the process, thus to generate benefits for the whole community.</p> <p>Support is provided by volunteers living near people in need. The volunteer's task is a weekly two-hour visit of an elderly person or a phone conversation. Bearing in mind that there are also lonely people who need companionship in hospitals, visits are also organized there likewise. That way, by being in regular contact with an elderly person, gradually a bond of sympathy and trust is established with the volunteer. In order to increase the impact and reception among the target group, regular social events are also organized in their neighbourhoods. In this way, the participation in the sociality and social value of the elderly increases. The project aims to encourage the creation of spaces for socialization and networking through recreational activities. In addition, the work they do with other organizations allows elderly to participate in more social projects and create an even stronger social network. Taking an elderly person out of their house, encouraging to attend an event, workshop or class, is the perfect opportunity to prevent loneliness and rediscover the joy of making friends and rebuilding their self-esteem or sense of purpose of life.</p>
Impact	<p>According to the 2020 <i>"Amigos de los Mayores"</i> Annual Report, in Spain, 66.2% of men and 69.4% of women over the age of 65 suffer from loneliness. In 2020, <i>"Amigos de los Mayores"</i> was at the side of 2,709 elderly people thanks to the support of 2,689 volunteers. At that time, 702 new volunteers joined the community action team. Moreover, the organization spread its initiative in 43 new municipalities and carried out 554 socialization activities, as well as many other activities.</p> <p>2,709 elderly people maintained bond and friendship with 2,689 volunteers, sharing 583,320 hours of good companionship in 106 municipalities in Spain, with the support of 4,955 members and donors.</p>
Innovation	<p>The <i>"Barrios Amigos"</i> project is an innovative citizens' initiative. Its aim is to foster intergenerational relations and neighbourhood solidarity through easy and cost-free actions between neighbours in the neighbourhood. Each person intervenes at their own pace, according to their possibilities and preferences. <i>"Barrios Amigos"</i> is a project that aims to offer other</p>

	<p>forms of citizen participation adapted to the new rhythms of life. It makes volunteering available to everyone, turning flexibility into its main strength.</p> <p>“Barrios Amigos”, indeed is conceived as a tool in which not all activity depend on a single person.</p>
Sustainability	<p>The project idea was firstly launched and promoted in France by the association “<i>Les Petits Frères des Pauvres</i>” with the implementation of the project “<i>Voisin-Age</i>”. This French organization has promoted the development of this project among the members of the International Federation to which it belongs. The Spanish Federation “<i>Amigos de los Mayores</i>” decided to set up this service in Zaragoza to complement other supporting activities conducted by the organisation, offering an alternative to traditional volunteering and allowing other forms of citizen participation. This practice, then, has already proven to be successful in different contexts, even during the Covid-19 confinement situation when the service continued to be active.</p> <p>Volunteers are asked to incorporate information about their agenda and activities on a digital platform to facilitate coordination between the neighbours and with the intention of ensuring the safety and well-being of the elderly. A network of “Neighbourhood Leaders” (neighbours who coordinate and supervise the functioning of the project in each neighbourhood), in addition, support the technical staff of the “<i>Amigos de los Mayores</i>” organization, creating a highly functional and sustainable system and supplying continuous support to the volunteers involved.</p>
Transferability	<p>This practice can be applied in any country and in any community. Volunteering is a widely available and flexible tool for bringing needed changes in the society. The working mechanisms used here can be easily adapted to the needs of other organisations working to combat loneliness and social exclusion among older people, and beyond. “<i>Amigos de los Mayores</i>”, as a member of an International Federation which brings together associations and other types of not-for-profit organisations that work to combat loneliness and social isolation among older people through their mission and activities, is a widely recognised organisation whose work contributes to the spread of this mission throughout the world. In this way, their working tools and ideas reach out to places where this theme is less developed and where they can be used in the same way.</p>

Title	“ <i>Madrid Vecina</i> ”
Location	Spain, Madrid
Organisation	“Grandes Amigos” (Big Friends), Madrid City Council
Website	www.grandesamigos.org/madrid-vecina/

Overview	<p>“<i>Madrid Vecina</i>” is a project promoted by the Spanish NGO “<i>Grandes Amigos</i>” in collaboration with the Madrid City Council that seeks to improve the well-being and health of the elderly, by regenerating neighbourhood ties and involving the whole neighbourhood to detect and prevent loneliness. The developed neighbourhood support network brings together neighbours, companies, public administration representatives, neighbourhood associations and many more. Together they form a network to keep an eye on older people in the environment, to find out if they are or feel lonely, to help them with everything they need to facilitate their socialisation and participation in neighbourhood life. Through simple, everyday gestures of good neighbourliness, “<i>Madrid Vecina</i>” want them to always feel accompanied and supported in whatever they need. In this way the project contributes to improve their well-being and health and to build a friendly neighbourhood that cares for its neighbours.</p> <p>etc. Everyone in the neighbourhood and in the community can participate in the activities of the project “<i>Madrid Vecina</i>”. As well as being a detection network, they inform older people about the different options for companionship, socialisation and support they need, such as volunteers, neighbourhood associations, social care, municipal health centres. In this way they make available to each older person the most appropriate resources nearby, based on their needs and preferences. Through this neighbourhood network, the project also promotes awareness-raising activities to spread the reality of older people, fostering their integration and the dignified treatment of older people.</p>
Impact	<p>Following the 2020 <i>Grandes Amigos</i> Annual Report, 1168 older people took part in various programmes offered by the organization, 23% more than the previous year. 86% of older people participating in the organisation's programmes are women, men represent 14%. The older people they accompany are increasingly diverse, although this profile is most often that of a woman aged 84, living alone, receiving emotional support at home. In 2020, 1407 volunteers took part in projects, 31% more than in 2019. They have mobilised volunteers through 27 action teams. These self-managed groups are a catalyst for the participation of volunteers and older people in the neighbourhoods.</p> <p>Neighbourhood networks such as “<i>Madrid Vecina</i>” were crucial during the pandemic to provide support to elderly who were suffering from loneliness and isolation. Telephone support programmes were indeed launched to provide support during the hardest phase of the pandemic, although face-to-face activities were resumed as soon as possible. Thanks to the project 1200 elderly received support by around 1500 volunteers during that period.</p>
Innovation	<p>“<i>Madrid Vecina</i>” developed a set of tools to involve the entire neighborhood in the project. People can easily participate in different ways: spreading the word about the project, learning to detect loneliness, mapping the neighbourhood. All these actions finally increase the number of people, entities and companies willing to help older people.</p>

	<p>These tools are available on the website of the organization but they are also spread as brochures everywhere in the neighbourhood. In this way, all the people with whom the older person comes into contact (the shopkeeper, the post office worker, the pharmacist, the baker, etc.) can help identify if an older person feels lonely, has lost a loved one, if their physical or mental health seems to be deteriorating, etc.</p>
Sustainability	<p>“<i>Madrid Vecina</i>” is a project tailored to the needs of lonely elderly people but also aimed at the creation of intergenerational bonds. Young people involved in the project, as stated in a video of the initiative, are aware that being integrated into their neighbourhood means more than just hanging out with people of their same age. They are aware that old people can be interesting friends, can provide them with new points of view, and can also be considered just as friends who go to water their plants when they are on holidays. Of course, all cases are different, but many older people are independent, they just need to have meaningful relationships in their lives. The sustainability of the project lies in the fact that all parties involved are aware that it is not a question of performing an act of charity but of promoting the well-being of the entire neighbourhood.</p>
Transferability	<p>This practice can be easily used in different contexts. Initially, it has been established in three neighbourhoods of Madrid. Then, to meet the needs of older people living in villages and small towns, in 2020 the organization also started the project in rural areas of the region of Cantabria too. So, it is possible that it will be extended to other areas. The tools developed in the framework of the project can be also adapted to various needs and contexts.</p>

Title	Progetto Fragili/ Via Belgrado (<i>Project Fragile Elderly People/ Belgrado Street</i>)
Location	Italy, Carpi (MO).
Organisation	Giovani per Carpi Anziani e Non solo Unione delle terre d’Argine
Website	http://www.fragiliterredargine.it/
Overview	<p>The project Fragile Elderly People aims to identify, on the territory, fragile people over 75 years old who live alone or with another person over 75 in a critical town’s district, examine their needs and difficulties and then promote socialization, aggregation and social participation. After a first work of mapping fragile people on the territory emerged that “Belgrado Street” was a Carpi’s quarter localized in an unfavourable position surrounded by the</p>

	<p>orbital road and with a few shops. In this street lived a lot of people over 75 without a strong and supportive familiar network.</p> <p>The youths who belong to the voluntary association, called Giovani per Carpi, coordinated by Anziani e Non solo, interviewed Belgrado Street's fragile elderly people in order to identify their needs. Then they organized educational and informational meetings for the fragile elderly who lived in "Belgrado Street". The main topics of these meetings were for instance healthy lifestyles, how to protect themselves from the truffles or the organization of the social services. The young volunteers organized also a lot of recreational activities such as card games, bingos, karaoke and banquettes.</p> <p>These activities took place in a condominium's room and garden in this street, that became a point of reference for the fragile elderly people.</p> <p>The quarter's storekeepers and neighbours were also involved in order to create a support network deeply-rooted on the territory.</p>
Impact	<p>The project has been positive effects in terms of identification of hidden needs, promotion of social inclusion, reduction of isolation and loneliness. Elderly people and young volunteers reported a high level of satisfaction. Thanks to this project the fragile elderly were more willing to exit from their home, meet other people and fight against fears and anxiety.</p> <p>Successively other voluntary associations were involved in this project and this have allowed an extension of the project to other town's districts.</p>
Innovation	<p>This project has realized a solid supportive network composed of social services, voluntary associations, storekeepers and neighbours around fragile elderly people and this is the main social innovative aspect.</p> <p>Furthermore, the mapping of the fragile elderly is useful also in case of environmental emergency (e.g. earthquakes, floods) in order to manage the rescue process. Also, during the covid-19 crisis this mapping was very helpful in order to identify elderly people who could need support, assistance and monitoring.</p> <p>This project allows young people to spend some quality time with elderly people promoting intergenerational relationships and exchange.</p>
Sustainability	<p>In light of the positive results of the piloting projects on Belgrado Streets, the local administration has decided to support the extension of it. To this day five voluntary associations – included the voluntary association Giovani per Carpi- are involved in this project, with two volunteers for each association. Thanks to the wide involvement of human local resources the project is now extended to other Carpi's quarters (De Amicis Street and Santa Chiara Street) and to another town (Campogalliano) involving a large amount of fragile elderly people.</p> <p>The project's practice shows a high level of replicability.</p>
Transferability	<p>At the beginning of the project the mapping fragile people was carried out on four different towns of Modena's province (Carpi, Campogalliano, Novi</p>

	<p>and Soliera) and after was chosen only Belgrado Street for the project's piloting. This mapping of all fragile people who live in four different towns would be used in order to extend the project. Anziani e Non solo has disclosed the project to the council administrations of the four towns mentioned above.</p> <p>From December 2021 to March 2022 Anziani e Non solo led an educational programme aimed to train the new volunteers who are involved in the project. On May 2022 was organized a public event aimed to divulge this initiative.</p>
Additional info	<p><i>Add any additional information related to the good practice you consider important.</i></p> <p><i>(Approx. 150-200 words)</i></p>

Title	<p>Il sostegno tra generazioni: un'occasione per giovani ed Anziani di stare insieme (<i>The intergenerational support: an opportunity for young and elderly people to stay together</i>)</p>
Location	<p>Italy, Mestre and Marghera (VE)</p>
Organisation	<p>Servizio civile città di Venezia Servizio civile Universale</p>
Website	<p>https://www.comune.venezia.it/it/content/il-sostegno-generazioni-un-occasione-giovani-ed-anziani-stare-assieme</p>
Overview	<p>This project aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - promote intergenerational support; - support the fragile people's autonomy; - improving elderly people's safety; - prevent marginality and loneliness; - encourage their social participation; - promote their well-being and support their residual skills. <p>In order to reach these goals young people organize educational and recreational activities (e.g. dancing, bingo...) which involve fragile people.</p> <p>This project encompasses four different elderly's structures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elderly's Service (Mestre); - Elderly's Services (Marghera); - The Opera Santa Maria della Carità elderly's residential structure (Mestre) - Services Center IPAV (a social care service in Mestre). <p>In each structure there are 2 young volunteers.</p> <p>The young volunteers who works in the Elderly's Services in Mestre and Marghera and in the Services Center IPAV support the realization of the welfare programs of the elderly people who live in their home. They buy basic necessity products for elderly people, administer their bureaucratic</p>

	<p>paperwork, promote and support their access to the services and organize recreational activities for them.</p> <p>As regarding the young volunteers who work in the residential structure, they collaborate with the educators in order to plan the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - artistic and creative workshops; - reading activities; - recreational activities such as bingo, crossword puzzles, watching films...; - musicotherapy workshops; - cognitive and sensory stimulation activities. <p>The young volunteers underwent 2 education courses before starting their voluntary activities.</p>
Impact	<p>The project involved 8 young volunteers, 1 elderly's residential structure and 3 elderly's services.</p> <p>The Opera Santa Maria della Carità elderly's residential structure in Mestre hosts 132 elderly people. As regarding the elderly's services, due to the fact that are public services the number of beneficiaries is quite variable.</p> <p>Each volunteer offers 1145 hours of voluntary activities per year. The project started in 2021 and is still ongoing so the final results at the moment are not available.</p>
Innovation	<p>The innovative aspects of this project is that young people offers support to the fragile elderly who live in their home or in a residential structure, in a structured, professional and organizational way, according to the scheduled plan. This represents an opportunity for the young people to build a positive relationship with older people. They can also learn how plan a welfare programs and social activities targeted to elderly people.</p> <p>On the other hand for the elderly people is an opportunity to maintain their social participation and autonomy. They can build a significant intergenerational relationship and feel a sense of usefulness and engagement.</p>
Sustainability	<p>This project is financed by Servizio Civile Universale. The Servizio Civile Universale ensures 77 hours of educational activities and 25 hours of tutoring for the young volunteers. The volunteers can obtain formative credits for the university. At the moment the project is on the first year of implementation so is not scheduled a replication or an extension of it.</p>
Transferability	<p>This project should be applicable in other elderly's services and residential structure for elderly people.</p> <p>For this reason, the young volunteers are engaged in publicity events and distribution of fliers which include the activities of the project.</p> <p>The volunteers also organize dissemination meetings that take place in the schools and in the voluntary associations in order to raise awareness about the topic of the intergenerational solidarity.</p>
Additional info	<p><i>Add any additional information related to the good practice you consider important.</i></p> <p><i>(Approx. 150-200 words)</i></p>

Title	SeniorApp
Location	Poland, Lodz
Organisation	SeniorApp Sp. z o.o.
Website	https://seniorapp.pl
Overview	<p>SeniorApp is a web-based platform and mobile application designed for all people in need of assistance and their families, looking for support in care and matters of everyday life. The creators want to develop the technology in such a way as to fight social exclusion and help people in need by implementing the idea of corporate social responsibility. The project was inspired by personal experience in caring for people in need of help. The mission has become to create a tool that will connect people who use it into a community and provide a mutually beneficial, simple way to communicate with each other. It creates a community of people from different fields who are willing and able to share their time and skills to help others. SeniorApp plans to constantly develop the platform and adapt it to the needs of Seniors and people who need help and care.</p>
Impact	<p>SeniorApp entered the Polish market in March 2021 and as of November 2021, the number of total users was 13267 and the number of verified caregivers was 3342. SeniorApp is an application that can be installed for free on any smartphone. With SeniorApp, seniors can select a service for themselves with a few clicks, such as cleaning the garden, a visit to a physiotherapist or even companionship during a walk. Using the app also brings a lot of benefits to elderly caregivers, who can more easily and accurately meet the needs of their loved ones. Everyone using the app has an impact on its development and can suggest what else they need. The application solves real problems that seniors and their caregivers face every day. The appearance of the application is adapted to the capabilities of the elderly, and the way of using it is intuitive. With a few clicks you can ask for support for yourself or someone close to you, choosing not a specific service, but a specific person verified by the platform staff. This is especially appreciated by people who are separated by a large distance from their charges and are not able to take care of them on a daily basis. SeniorApp is the winner of the main prize in the competition “Mam Pomysł na Startup”, edition 2020. International experts and partners have recognized and rewarded the huge potential in building a community around people who need support in their daily lives in everyday life. The SeniorApp platform is an excellent example of using technology for innovative building of safe relations among recipients. The implementation of services through mobile devices is part of the idea of preventing and combating the threat of COVID-19. However, SeniorApp will not end with the coronavirus outbreak, because the problems of the elderly and needy will not disappear.</p>

Innovation	<p>Thanks to the application, you can order, for example, an appointment with a family doctor or physiotherapist, psychological consultation, night care, but also window cleaning, massage, computer emergency service or handyman. You can easily order a beautician, hairdresser or gardener to your home! Interestingly, the application takes care of all levels of seniors' needs and even provides opportunities for socializing and personal development. Examples of this include walking companionship, Smartphone Education or language learning. These are just some of the vast capabilities of the app.</p> <p>Innovative aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • installation of the application is fast and intuitive, • use of the application is free of charge and available throughout Poland, • the application is adapted to the needs and abilities of the elderly (contrast, large letters) • the application can be used by people of any age - you can create an account as a user of the application or as a user offering help • payments are cashless and safe - secured through BlueMedia system, • in case of questions or problems everyone has support: hotline, e-mail, as well as chat in the application and on the website • everyone has influence on the direction of application development e.g. by offering services.
Sustainability	<p>SeniorApp is constantly evolving and the key to its continued growth is undoubtedly its unique values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • security: in terms of payment security as well as data protection, • human connection: global solutions for local communities, • user satisfaction: satisfying and fulfilling customer needs, • tolerance: every person is different, but all are equal and equally, • deserve respect and support when needed, • ethical: acting in accordance with the law and good morals, • innovation: using technology for the greater good. <p>The SeniorApp undoubtedly needs caregivers and the promotion of a wavering range of services to sustain user growth in order to achieve a safe number of regular engaged users with a fair proportion of caregivers. In 2022, another company - SeniorApp - joined the portfolio of the Pracuj Ventures fund. The fund took a minority stake in this company, pointing to the prospective market, the challenges of an aging population and the gig economy trend as the main arguments. SeniorApp is the eighth company in Pracuj Ventures' portfolio. At the time of the transaction, SeniorApp had more than 16,000 users.</p>
Transferability	<p>SeniorApp is the first such application for seniors in Poland. It mainly uses the involvement of people who want to help the elderly. There are other applications for seniors, but SeniorApp definitely has a competitive advantage due to the scope of services being a niche in Poland. Other applications may be created in Poland with a similar mechanism, however, it may be a challenge to implement another application and to attract new or "old" users already using SeniorApp. However, the mechanism can be successfully used by other organizations to provide services in other area. SeniorApp is currently developing only in Poland, but the concept of entering other European markets seems to be a good strategy. However, it requires good preparation and adaptation to specific needs due to large</p>

	differences between countries in terms of the number of seniors, services provided by the state, etc. factors.
Additional info	<p>Although SeniorApp has been on the market for less than a year, it has managed to gather a large and constantly growing group of users. Currently, it can be fully used in 25 major Polish cities, but the company's goal is to increase the number of SeniorApp users and the platform's reach to cover the whole country. There are two main arguments behind the investment decision of Pracuj Ventures. First of all, SeniorApp operates on a very prospective market. Due to the current demographic trends and the progressing aging of society, the market for services for seniors will consistently increase in value. According to the CSO, at the end of 2020 the number of people aged 60 and over exceeded 9.8 and accounted for 25.6 percent of the population. The CSO forecast indicates that the number of people aged 60 and over in Poland will increase to 10.7 million in 2030 and will reach 13.7 million in 2050. These people will make up about 40 percent of Poland's total population.</p>

Title	Program TWOJA OBECNOŚĆ POMAGA MI ŻYĆ (OBECNOŚĆ) - The program YOU HELP ME LIVE (OBEDIENCE)
Location	Poland, Warsaw
Organisation	Stowarzyszenie mali bracia Ubogich - Little Brothers of the Poor
Website	https://www.malibracia.org.pl/
Overview	<p>The idea of the Little Brothers of the Poor was born in 1939, finding its realization 7 years later, already after the war. The association was founded in 1946 by Armand Marquiset. It gathered young people ready to help the poorest. Right after the end of the Second World War, the poorest people were the elderly - lonely, abandoned, without any chance for help. That is why the Association decided to help this most needy part of the society. This is why "les petits frères des Pauvres" (the little brothers of the poor) attach the greatest importance to the relationship built through accompanying and listening to the elderly - this is the meaning of the Association's motto: flowers before bread. The association "les petits frères des Pauvres" exists worldwide and is active in 10 countries: France, Spain, Ireland, Canada, Germany, United States, Switzerland, Poland, Mexico and Romania.</p> <p>The Polish Association of Little Brothers of the Poor was established on 1 December 2002. The Little Brothers of the Poor Association in Poland operates in: Warsaw, Poznań, Lublin, Wrocław, Kraków, Łódź, Pruszków, Świdnik, Gniezno and Tarnów. In response to the deepening loneliness of the elderly the Association Little Brothers of the Poor created the Program YOU HELP ME LIVE (OBEDIENCE). Program is an organized</p>

	<p>accompanying voluntary service consisting of regular visits by volunteers to the homes of the residents of the Little Brothers of the Poor, through which an unusual relationship based on friendship and trust is built between the volunteer and the lonely senior. Hundreds of volunteers take part in the Program, giving lonely seniors support and a sense of security every day.</p>
<p>Impact</p>	<p>The volunteers of this organization (there are over 500 of them) are not only helpers of the elderly, but most of all their friends. They visit people living alone, take care of their health and mental condition. They accompany seniors every day, talk to them, go for walks, visit the theatre or exhibitions. They organize short trips out of town. They remember about birthdays and name days of their charges. They also do not forget about lonely seniors at Christmas (every year, thanks to the Donors, the Association organizes Christmas meetings, taking care of decorations, food and a warm atmosphere).</p> <p>In all their activities, the volunteers and employees are guided by the motto: flowers before bread. This motto emphasizes the importance of creating relationships based on friendship and empathy between the volunteer and the client.</p> <p>The aim is to reach out to people who need our help the most, to those for whom loneliness is the biggest problem and to improve the quality of life of the elderly by counteracting their isolation and social alienation.</p>
<p>Innovation</p>	<p>Volunteers are recruited to participate in the Program and each volunteer is assigned to one mentee whom they visit regularly. In this way, bonds are formed, close relationships and even intergenerational friendships for many years - an innovative approach. The charges are offered not only the company and support of a volunteer, but also: intergenerational meetings, vacation meetings (Easter), the opportunity to spend holidays together (One Day Holiday), various forms of group activity (Small Volunteer Initiatives), ad hoc help in exceptionally difficult situations. The association implements and engages in projects to help seniors get out of isolation. Here is a selection of special programs it has developed for isolated elderly people, which complement the program described above in a comprehensive and innovative way:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accompanying volunteerism, i.e., visits by volunteers to the homes of lonely seniors. • ‚Support. Awareness. Dignity‘, which involves organizing individual support for seniors, intergenerational meetings, recording memories of seniors • Alzheimer’s Stop - an initiative aimed at supporting carers of people with dementia through various activities including workshops and lectures. • Project for Veteran, which aims to support soldiers of the Warsaw Uprising and other veterans to counteract their loneliness. This project is realized together with Cultura Memoriae Foundation. • Helpline for elderly people. Experienced psychologists are on duty on the phone. Calling 22 635 09 54 one can convince oneself that worries and troubles shared with another person decrease by half.
<p>Sustainability</p>	<p>The quintessential activity is structured companion volunteering, which involves regular visits by qualified and trained volunteers to the homes of seniors. This professional system of long-term volunteering provides</p>

	<p>regular support and builds a sense of security, especially important for an elderly person living alone. Currently, the Little Brothers of the Poor Association has 450 residents from Poznań, Warsaw, Lublin, Wrocław, Kraków, Świdnik, Pruszków and Gniezno under its wings. Regular financial support is crucial and indispensable for the sustainability of the activities undertaken for all the residents. There are different possibilities of support: a one-time payment, a monthly payment of 32 PLN, 64 PLN or more, as well as donating 1% of your tax.</p> <p>The Little Brothers of the Poor Association has been operating in Poland since 2002, conducting recognizable, nationwide social campaigns with the following message to the companies: "Strengthen the social responsibility of your business by introducing cooperative programs for employees. Plan your activities with us based on the proposed programs or contact us to plan a solution that meets the needs of your business and the Association's charges." The results are impressive: 5000 engaged employees and 200000 PLN of raised funds.</p>
Transferability	<p>This practice can, of course, be applied in another area and with the appropriate involvement of volunteers and financial resources it can be successful. The effects of the activities of the organization described above are connected to many years of work, social campaigns, cooperation with partners it has acquired over the years, with companies and individual donors. There are other organizations that follow similar practices, but there are still too few of them in Poland. Therefore, it seems most appropriate to support the largest organizations and work with others on a cooperative basis. Certainly the competitive advantage is the long experience, recognition, non-standard approach in business and a wide range of activities.</p>
Additional info	<p>Example of partners' action:</p> <p>Starcom Polska and BBDO Warszawa prepared charity campaigns aimed at raising funds to organize Christmas for elderly lonely people. Starcom Polska ensured contact with a wide group of campaign recipients by providing media-diversified communication. On the other hand, cooperation with BBDO Warsaw allowed to prepare a coherent communication idea and professional tools, including spots.</p> <p>The social and fundraising campaigns PODARUJ WIGILIĘ ORAZ CICHĄ NOC. The campaigns reminded that during this joyful Christmas time, many lonely people need support.</p> <p>This is an example of unique cooperation where the combined forces of two agencies reinforced each other's actions giving a synergy effect. We reached with our message several million recipients making them aware of the presence of elderly lonely people in our society and their needs. Communicating measurable effects of support in proof of which the PODARUJ WIGILIĘ campaign won the silver EFFIE 2017 statuette.</p>
Title	<p>Friendship at Every Age: A Program to Combat Loneliness and Social Isolation of Elderly People</p>

Location	Greece
Organisation	Prolepsis Institute
Website	https://www.prolepsis.gr/en/programs/friendship-at-any-age-a-program-to-combat-loneliness-and-social-isolation-of-elderly-people https://filiasekathelikia.gr/
Overview	<p>Prolepsis Institute, in collaboration with the international organisation “Les Petits Frères des Pauvres”, is implementing the program “Friendship at Every Age”, which started on 12/4/20 and will last until 30/6/25. The program seeks to decrease social isolation and loneliness among older people in Greece through human contact and bonding. Additional aims of the program include strengthening the older people’s self-confidence, putting their needs and problems in the spotlight, and promoting volunteering in Greece.</p> <p>“Friendship at Every Age” involves groups of volunteers that operate at a local community-neighbourhood level, providing support to older people, such as weekly telephone communication or home visits and collective activities, events etc. Within the program framework, small groups of volunteers who are connected with older people are created to develop befriending relationships. For example, 2-3 volunteers are linked with 2-3 older persons, which helps the latter acquire more friends. Each volunteer contacts the beneficiaries by telephone at least once a week. When possible, volunteers make visits and activities such as walks, and visits to cultural activities, along with the beneficiaries. As a result, the elderly feel like active members of a community that values them while they are motivated spiritually and emotionally.</p>
Impact	<p>Provided that the program is relatively new and started operating during the COVID-19 pandemic, there is no data yet on its actual impact and the number of people involved. However, the program is expected to have a significant effect, especially regarding actively promoting volunteering through its activities. Anyone with sensitivity towards the elderly can volunteer for the project even without specialised knowledge or skills. The program welcomes pupils and students to become volunteers either through collaboration with their schools and universities or independently. The aim is for younger people to increase their knowledge of ageing and the challenges associated with it for older people while at the same time instilling a sense of social participation and contribution. Moreover, through their participation in the program, pupils and students can upgrade their CVs and academic and professional profiles. The “Friendship at Every Age” program is as well an ideal field for corporate volunteering, which allows employees to develop their competencies and skills and promotes team-building while at the same time contributing to society and a good reputation for the company.</p>

Innovation	<p>Within the program’s framework, a telephone line (+30 2106101300) is available to support older people who feel lonely and/or their carers, family members, and friends. The hotline operates from Monday to Friday, from 11 am to 8 pm, providing communication in a safe environment by trained staff; calls are not recorded, and the institute does not maintain or process the beneficiaries’ personal data. The services provided through the landline include communication for human contact and bonding, information about the befriending program and connection with volunteers, and liaison with other social services when required. As for the staff operating the hotline, they are trained volunteers who receive ongoing supervision and training. Another innovative aspect of the program is that it is both based on the volunteers’ contribution and also seeks to promote volunteerism in Greece.</p>
Sustainability	<p>The “Friendship at Every Age” program is implemented with a donation by the TIMA Charitable Foundation and supported by Envolve Entrepreneurship, while it will run at least until 2025. Moreover, the Region of Attica recently decided to put the program under its auspices, providing practical support to recognise the Prolepsis Institute’s initiative to combat loneliness in old age. Also, the program has multiple supporters¹, including municipalities, elderly care units, social services, local associations, public and private bodies, etc. It should be noted at this point that Prolepsis Institute participated with the “Friendship at Every Age” project in the Bravo 2021 - Bravo Sustainability Dialogue². Within this framework, initiatives and programs that promote sustainable development, responsible entrepreneurship, and social responsibility are evaluated and awarded for their contribution to society.</p>
Transferability	<p>The “Friendship at Every Age” program is implemented by Prolepsis Institute in collaboration with “Les Petits Frères des Pauvres (PFP)”, a large international organisation based in France with extensive experience in supporting the elderly. PFP executives provide expertise and guidance on training and the program’s overall implementation. Furthermore, Prolepsis Institute has extensive research experience on preventive medicine, awareness-raising, and information actions addressed to the elderly. Greece is among the fourteen countries worldwide in which this initiative is being implemented. Provided that several organisations and social partners participate and support the program (e.g., Municipalities of Agia Barbara, Lykovrisi – Pefki, Metamorphosis, Moschato – Tavros, Nea Smyrni, Serres, Oropos, Elderly Care Unit "House of Peace, Rodi Care Elderly Care Unit etc.) it is expected that the program will expand and the circle of support for older people will grow.</p>
Additional info	<p>The program was initially launched as a pilot scheme from December 2019 to April 2020, with volunteers and beneficiaries in the fire-stricken</p>

¹ <https://filiasekatheilikia.gr/supporters/>

² <https://bravosustainabilityawards.com/bravo-sustainability-week-2021/society/#>

	<p>areas of Eastern Attica (Mati) and Palaio Faliro. Then, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, volunteer visits to beneficiaries and collective activities were replaced by telephone communication. At the same time, cooperation with several care centres was established (i.e., Athens Nursing Home, Elderly Care Unit of the Meropeio Charitable Foundation, and Home of Christian Love).</p>
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Title	Online Companionship for the Elderly
Location	Greece
Organisation	Doctors of the World (Médecins du Monde)
Website	https://mdmgreece.gr/epigousa-paremvasi-se-evalota-atoma-60/ https://mdmgreece.gr/diadiktiaki-sintrofia-ilikiomenon/ https://www.timafoundation.org/el/grants/giatroi-tou-kosmou-iatriki-kai-psychologiki-ypostirixi-apomonomenon-kai-evaloton-atomon-60-2020/
Overview	<p>As part of the emergency intervention program required due to the unprecedented situation of the COVID-19 pandemic in Greece and worldwide, the organisation Doctors of the World launched a program called "Online Companionship" for vulnerable people over 60 years of age. The program involves the creation of virtual companionship and discussion groups that seek to break the isolation and feelings of loneliness experienced by older people during this period, especially for those without relatives. Specifically, older people are provided with tablets and easy-to-use technology, allowing them to connect even in the post-pandemic era. Older people are connected in virtual teams forming groups under the guidance of a specialist doctor and a psychologist and engage in simple activities together, such as drinking coffee online at a particular time of day. The program is part of a broader emergency intervention program for vulnerable people, covering multiple needs for isolated and vulnerable older individuals in the region of Attika. Apart from the Online Companionship, the intervention scheme entails as well the provision of medical advice and psychosocial support at a distance by telephone and the home delivery of medicines by the Doctors of the World's staff.</p>
Impact	<p>Even though the actual data for the numbers of vulnerable older citizens who participate in the "Online Companionship" program are not available, the program is considered to be of significant social impact as it aims to reach all isolated people over 60 years of age in the region of Attika. It is essential to note that the companionship program constitutes one of the three pillars of support provided to the elderly during the challenging COVID-19 period. The other two pillars are the provision of medical counselling and psychosocial support services by telephone and the home delivery of medicine. About the first one, the organisation's doctors provide medical advice. At the same time, psychologists and social workers</p>

	<p>support older people in dealing with feelings of isolation or their circumstances, thus, reducing the chances of developing psychosocial problems. As for the delivery of medicine to the elderly and especially to those who are financially vulnerable, the action aims to ensure that these people continue to receive their medication and prevents them from having to line up in queues at pharmacies, risking becoming infected with the coronavirus. Data is available for the numbers of beneficiaries in the actions mentioned above: 823 people registered to receive psychosocial and medical support by the end of July 2020, and the organisation's team conducted 565 psychosocial consultations, 442 medical consultations, and 505 door-to-door visits with 323 beneficiaries receiving free medication³.</p>
Innovation	<p>The "Online Companionship for the Elderly" program is pioneering for the Greek standards since there are not many similar initiatives available in the country to reduce feelings of loneliness and social isolation experienced by the elderly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, an innovative aspect of the program was the technological means used to ensure its smooth implementation. Specifically, a tablet device was given to beneficiaries to connect via video call and communicate with the other members of the group and the Doctors of the World specialised staff. The elderly who were not familiar with digital processes were facilitated in their efforts by the specialised team. Therefore, the means used were simple, functional, and suitable for the elderly population to be still valuable even after the end of the pandemic.</p>
Sustainability	<p>The emergency intervention program for vulnerable people over 60 years old, run by the Doctors of the World in Greece, is funded by the TIMA Charitable Foundation and the Hellenic Initiative Canada. Also, as mentioned previously, even though the program was launched as an emergency intervention program to support the elderly during the COVID-19 pandemic in Greece, it ultimately aims to keep operating in the long run. The technological means used for its implementation and the digital skills provided to the elderly for their participation will still be relevant and valuable even in the post-pandemic period.</p>
Transferability	<p>Provided that the online companionship program is coordinated by the Doctors of the World's specialised staff, the practice can be adapted in other contexts where psychologists and social workers are already employed to support the elderly. In addition, elderly care units, services, and associations could collaborate to organise activities to bring together their beneficiaries who could develop friendships among them. Moreover, digital tools could further facilitate this process, making it more feasible to arrange such expected time together for elderly peers.</p>
Additional info	<p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IObqZu76F2I&t=135s</p>

³ <https://ca.thehellenicinitiative.org/legacy-uploads/2020/08/1st-Narrative-and-Financial-ReportTHI-Canada-July-2020.pdf>

Title	<i>'In Touch' – In Touch Befrienders</i>
Location	Cyprus
Organisation	Cyprus Samaritans & World Befrienders
Website	https://www.cyprussamaritans.org/in-touch-befrienders/
Overview	<p>This befriending service offered, called “In Touch Befrienders”, is registered through Befrienders Worldwide which operates in over 38 countries in the world.</p> <p>In Touch Befrienders, is operated by Cyprus Samaritans listening volunteers who have volunteered to be In Touch as well, however not all Cyprus Samaritans Listening volunteers are “In Touch” volunteers.</p> <p>“In Touch” has its own dedicated phone number, i.e. 99091614 and anyone who would like to make use of the service only needs to ring this number once. All other calls are generated by the “In Touch” volunteers.</p> <p>Having no one to talk to can make humans feel isolated and alone. Talking to one of the friendly, trained volunteers at a suitable and most needed time can make all the difference to one’s day.</p> <p>Calls are made by the befriending service volunteers at the time and day that the recipient would like and the topics of the calls are chosen by the recipients as is the length of call.</p> <p>The “In Touch” system has been running for over 2 years, and there are recipients that still call on a weekly basis.</p> <p>“In Touch” tries to allocate 2 volunteers to each recipient so that relationships can be built up if required. The calls can be stopped, time/day/date changed, calls suspended and anything else solely dependent on the wishes of the recipient.</p> <p>If someone wants to have further information or to contact the service, then s/he can arrange a regular “In Touch call” with the befriending team at: 99091614. All calls are confidential.</p>
Impact	This is an innovating initiative practice that has been recently running under the motto: “A simple friendly call can change lives”. Thus no data is available at this point. However, as it is noted on the website, positive feedback has been received from those making use of this service.
Innovation	This is the first initiative of its kind, so it is an innovation/ innovative practice itself.
Sustainability	From its website description, it seems that the practice has all potentials to enjoy the technical, human and financial conditions to ensure its continuity

	over time. The fact that it is part of a global initiative may also be said to ensure its sustainability.
Transferability	Being a practice of a global initiative it also ensured transferability. Since the global initiative runs in 38 different countries, it seems that the practice can be applicable and replicable in different contexts with positive results, as it has mechanisms and tools in place to enable other organizations to adapt it.
Additional info	N/A

Title	RED CROSS Home Care Programme for Vulnerable People
Location	<i>Nicosia, Cyprus</i>
Organisation	<i>Cyprus Red Cross Society</i>
Website	https://www.redcross.org.cy/en/home
Overview	Cyprus Red Cross Society operates a home care programme for vulnerable people which promotes social relations by organising group activities like gardening and bingo. Aiming at fighting loneliness and promoting mental health in the older population, the home care programme is influenced by positive psychology, which emphasises the bright side of human nature, the strengths and virtues of an individual, and what makes life worth living.
Impact	A lack of financial resources is a key factor to the vulnerability of older people. For older populations the pension is the only source of income, and at most times, this is low. Thus, poverty risks are higher amongst people further long in life, who are also reported to be already at risk of social exclusion, including minority groups. Women are also more likely to experience poverty in old age, due to a number of factors, e.g. discrimination in the workplace, unpaid maternity leave, informal caring for family members, etc. Thus, promoting and funding programmes targeting the education, social inclusion, befriending, equality, etc. of vulnerable and socially excluded groups is highly critical nowadays and programmes of such kind have a high impact.
Innovation	This programme serves intergenerational goals in contexts of positive psychology which is an innovative context nowadays, opening pathways to well-being.
Sustainability	<p>Promoting and funding befriending programmes for vulnerable and socially excluded groups in the fields of education, social inclusion, well-being, equality, etc. targets sustainability.</p> <p>Red Cross promotes volunteerism, both as a form of lifelong learning and as a way to actively contribute to community life. This is a valuable tool to shape inclusive societies that work to reduce the vulnerabilities and protect the dignity of people of all ages. With the number of older people in the EU continuously increasing in the coming decades, a need emerges for Europe to respond to the realities and needs of an ageing society as well as the demographic changes that will have various implications for the lives of individuals and societies. Sustainable national and regional strategies that will promote solutions together, across generations are essential.</p>

Transferability	With Red Cross being a global organisation with services and initiatives being easily adapted and replicable in multiple world-wide contexts, transferability is insured. it also ensured transferability.
Additional info	https://redcross.eu/latest-news/volunteering-and-intergenerational-connections-to-promote-active-ageing http://redcross.org.cy/images/media/file/C RCS%20Annual%20Report%20for%202018.pdf

Annex 2: Findings from the interviews per country

N. Macedonia

Findings from the interviews with youth

In N.Macedonia, 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'*.

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.

Conclusion

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.

Spain

Findings from the interviews with youth

Each of the respondents has previous experience in providing voluntary work. Two of them worked before with migrants, from which one additionally worked with children and youth at risk of social exclusion. The other two study participants helped people with mental health issues and one of them also has experience working with the homeless and unemployed jobseekers.

Two of the respondents have experience in volunteering with elderly people. Both have good memories of that time, describing it as enriching and realizing, that this group of people needs more support than the young. Additionally, one of the participants talks about how special elderly people are with their age and a wealth of experience they have, and at the same time very often maintaining spiritually young. Moreover, the respondent emphasizes how important it is to help older ones with fear to maintain this energy, especially when they face health problems related to age.

None of the respondents heard of “befriending” services described with this word, although one of them is familiar with this kind of help providers named differently. Another of the participants shows his big interest with this word seeing it as connected with creating a bond of friendship important in his opinion to fight the loneliness of the elderly.

Regarding the question of experience in providing help based on the idea of befriending, each of the respondents understands this type of support in a slightly different way. One of the respondents replied negating, admitting that he had never been involved in anything like this. Another participant claims that he took part in a similar project keeping the elderly company in activities such as going to the theatre, cinema or exhibitions. Third participant confessed that during the pandemic he helped elderly people with shopping and had short conversations with them when leaving it, but did not consider this to be a kind to “befriending”. The last of the respondents admits that he thought to apply for a similar project, but believed that special competences were needed for this, and therefore he resigned.

Two of the respondents assumed that there are some kind of befriending practices in their neighbourhoods in some civic centers and associations or other with regard to the pandemic, although neither of them is sure. The other two never heard of anything similar.

The things that, according to the respondents, would encourage young people to participate in befriending programs are to guarantee accommodation and nutrition, build awareness about the situation of older people and pay attention to intergenerational similarities rather than differences, build relationships slowly and persuade young people to try the first familiarization meeting to better understand older people and see the positives that they can learn from this experience, the fight against the social stigma associated with the feeling of young people as being negatively evaluated by the older generations.

Participants believe that young people can take a lot of personal benefits from a similar experience, such as ability to emphasize more, know more about their origins, culture and traditions.

According to the respondents, the greatest difficulties in involving older people in this project are admitting to themselves that they are in a situation where they can no longer rely only on themselves and need help, fear of being misunderstood and not having common interests with the volunteer, as well as a lack of awareness about the options of receiving help.

According to the research participants, the interpersonal skills needed to be part of the befriending project are emotional intelligence, patience, empathy, respect, sensitivity, sense of humor and positive

attitude. One of the participants claims that this project does not require any special skills, it is enough to be willing to help and be aware of the mutual benefits.

The things that participants consider as possibly increasing the attractiveness of the service are advertising the project in youth centers, universities, bars etc. In addition, proposing something encouraging, which will benefit both parties, as well as relying on the creativity of young people and using their ideas for creating collaborative activities.

The subjects proposed by the respondents, which in their opinion should be covered in training for future volunteers, are how to take care of an elderly person, communication skills, hygiene management in the elderly and management of emotions. One of them also thinks it might be helpful to complete the training with handing a certificate.

The below statements have been assessed as followed:

Table 1 Young participants answers

I like to help older people	5	6	5	4
volunteering with older people can help me develop my skills:	6	6	4	4
volunteering with older people can help me meet new people and socialize	5	4	5	4
volunteering with older people can increase empathy and active listening	6	5	7	5
I would like to learn more about "befriending" services	5	4	5	3
I would like to participate in "befriending" services	3	3	5	4

The above results show that despite the great interest in the project and the positive reception of this type of services, the willingness to take part in befriending practice is relatively low compared to other responses.

Findings from the interviews with the elderly

The elderly people interviewed stated that they were not aware of befriending services are, that they had heard of something similar during the pandemic, but they thought it was an emergency-generated service that was limited to the time of the pandemic. As for their community, they do not know if similar services are offered, they think they are by ONG as the Red Cross, but they are not sure about it. They have not heard anything about them, but they have not sought them out either because they say that are not in a situation where they need support at the moment.

It was very interesting to discuss this point because according to what he said during the interview, until they see the need to access such services, they tend not to care about them, despite the benefits they know they could have in terms of intergenerational exchange.

What would motivate them to participate in such services is to be able to spend quality time in the company of young people who are genuinely interested in their company. They say they would prefer to have an organisation behind the young people involved to ensure the safety of the activities and the good intentions of the young people involved - they state that they are afraid that some young people may take advantage of older and vulnerable people.

They have no doubt that such services could be very beneficial for both older and younger people to learn from each other. Such services can offer the opportunity to share realities and points of view that

sometimes seem to have nothing in common – this is considered very important to reach mutual understanding.

They tell us that they think that there are many older people who need these services because they feel very lonely, especially those who are widowed.

They themselves believe that in the future they could get involved in such services, but not now because they believe they have a well-developed family and social network and do not feel such a need.

For their future involvement in such services, they tell us that they would like to start with group activities, which can offer the possibility for friendships with young people to rise in a more spontaneous way and considering possible common interests, similarities and sympathies. In order to promote the participation of both elderly and young people, they say that playful and entertaining activities; they mention among other things playing cards. It would also be important to ensure that the activities are interesting for both groups and that both can learn something during the activities.

They do not believe that the implementation of these activities is very complex as long as the young people involved are truly committed. They believe that there are many young people who want to get involved in such activities, although it is true that flexibility must be ensured and also that the participation does not become an obligation.

As for the type of communication they would like to have with young people, while preferring face-to-face contact, some of them do not discard the use of the Internet. One of the participants, in particular, tells us that a very important part of her network of contacts is maintained thanks to social media platforms such as WhatsApp, that give her the chance to stay in contacts with many people, to re-establish contacts with old friends and have a closer contact with family members who live far away. During the pandemic, this was essential and is likely to remain so for all those people who for one reason or another cannot easily leave their homes and are at high risk of loneliness and isolation.

Table 2 Elderly participants' answers

Befriending will stimulate companionship and conversation	7	7	6	5
Befriending will be a chance for new leisure opportunities	7	7	5	6
Befriending can help me meet new people and socialize	7	6	6	7
Befriending can increase empathy and active listening	7	6	6	5
I would like to learn more about befriending	5	7	6	5
I would like to be part of a befriending service	7	4	6	5

Conclusion

The above information on the already existing befriending services shows that they are getting more and more popular and possibly got a boost thanks to the health emergency due to Covid-19 during which loneliness and isolation worsened for many people (the elderly, people with disabilities, etc.), but were experienced by the rest of the population as well, perhaps making the need to help people who suffer from them, more evident. The proposed good practices highlight that these befriending services can only be put into practice with the active participation of volunteers, which is what also makes them sustainable economically and over time. It is not just a question of dedicating time to people who feel lonely, but above all of investing in the well-being of their neighbourhood, creating a network that benefits all its members, in terms of learning and mutual support.

However, despite such positive effects that are brought by already operating services, the interviews with both the young and the elderly show that the awareness of this form of help and the interest in them is rather low. Among young people, the offer of befriending services and their provision of voluntary support for the elderly was more likely to be received positively, but at the same time awareness of the already existing organizations and the desire to participate in them were relatively low. As for the interest in this type of project among the surveyed older people, their responses show that they are not aware of the existence of this type of services and possibly, because of the way they imagine them, they do not seem to be really attracted to them at the moment, possibly because they do not feel the need of support.

However, the above interviews show that, according to the respondents, this interest in mutual cooperation can be stimulated. 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.

Italy

Findings from the interviews with youth

In Italy, 3 young people (2 males and 1 female) aged between 23 and 29 (average age 26) were interviewed, with an education level of high school diploma for one and master's degree for the other two. All the participants are workers and all have volunteering experience, both in general and with the elderly.

Only one of them knew the term 'befriending' in English, while two were unfamiliar with the term but once given the definition stated that they knew of some initiatives in the area of this type.

Among the motivational aspects in having relationships with older people is mentioned the possibility to talk about historical and experiential issues and to get to know interesting things from the past "*At the basis of motivation there may be a sense of intergenerational alliance, an awareness of the richness that comes from the generations who have lived the history of our country and who are the custodians of our memory*" (D. 29). Another motivating aspect is the idea of being able to improve people's lives, for example through support for digitisation and digital literacy which could make older people autonomous on certain aspects (e.g., booking medical appointments). Interfacing with an elderly person can bring several advantages. First, it can be very stimulating because of the history and life stories they can share, which only a mature person preserves. It's possible to create bonds that enrich growth both personally, emotionally and in self-esteem, by maturing interiorly the awareness of making the difference. A connection with an elderly person offers young people the opportunity to learn from a different but close culture, taking cues from a different lifestyle and bringing them up to date with modern life. Moreover, taking part in befriending initiatives defines one's own style of caring, which is present in all volunteering situations, but which in the frail condition of the elderly person has its greatest expression.

The main difficulty may be the fact that the elderly people sometimes believe that the things of today's 'young world' are not for them (e.g., smartphones, the Internet, home banking, digital identity, etc.), but when they then approach them, they become the first users, so maybe there is a prejudice.

On a purely befriending service, the obstacles that may be encountered could be individual personality characteristics (mistrust, closure, avoidance). Another challenge may be mistrust of novelty and rigidity towards changing routines and habits, both for the environment and for personal habits.

Among the skills one should be: the ability to put oneself out there and make a lowkey enter into the lives of older people, active and interested listening skills and patience.

Befriending services can become more attractive by paying attention to the type of communication and presentation that is made of the initiatives, succeeding in conveying well messages and objectives that must be made about the end users and the specific contexts. It's also crucial for the elderly that the service offered does not transform daily routines but those activities are proposed that fit well with people's lives (e.g., attention to timetables, preferring activities at home instead of requiring travel). It could also propose activities that promote a mutual knowledge of people and customs (culture of those times or our times, traditions, games). It would be useful also to emphasize the issue of being able to grow together and the well-being one can derive from doing well for another person, doing new activities and feeling part of the community.

All participants stated that they like helping elderly people and that participating in a befriending service for elderly could be a way to learn new things and develop new skills. They pretty agreed that initiatives of this kind could help them to meet new people and socialize and absolutely agreed that they could enhance their empathic and active listening skills. They would also all be interested in learning more about befriending services and taking part in them.

It would be useful to have a training curriculum that deals with elements of adult psychology, the pathologies of old age (general geriatric pathologies), the emotional impact that the pathology may have

on the person and his/her family, active listening techniques, information on the historical-cultural context, and elements regarding possible rigidities (elderliness bias in order to be able to deal with them in the best possible way). It would be very helpful if many examples and stories were given *“Even more useful is knowing how to work with human, which is difficult to teach in a course and is easier to understand based on the testimony of people who have already done it”* (L. 26) and have exchange with mentors/supervisors.

Findings from the interviews with the elderly

In Italy 7 elderly participants (6 females and 1 male) with an age between 73 and 88 years (average age 80 years) were involved. All participants are pensioners and the highest level of education is primary school certificate for 5 of them, secondary school certificate for 1 and high school diploma for 1. Most of the participants (6/7) said to have benefitted of voluntary services offered by young people, even if occasionally and through existing initiatives, and they were all positive experiences. Mainly the activities carried out involved company and entertainment. Time was spent playing cards, bingo, dancing and listening to music or singing. None of the participants had ever heard the name “befriending” in English language and didn’t know of any specific initiatives in the area focus on promoting the relationship between young volunteers and older people.

Among the main benefits listed of this type of service was the possibility to gain joy, cheerfulness and entertainment by carrying out activities such as games and dances that would entertain both parts. Relationships between young and old would bring an exchange of knowledge, interests and life stories to both. Through this kind of intergenerational relationship, it would in fact be possible to tell each other and exchange advice, ideas and teachings *“When I was young, I loved spending time with children and teaching them poems and prayers and even though I’m not a teacher I liked to make them learn”* (C. 82). The main challenges might be that an elderly is not used to interfacing with young people and feels that there is a gap in language and communication. Indeed, the older persons involved claim that the knowledge and skills of older and younger persons are different. The entertainment tools and activities that characterise the generations are different and games are not always in common and known to all generations. It is also pointed out that the elderly sometimes has no interest in learning skills and knowledge, such as knowing how to use technologies, *“Even if my nephew wants to teach me something with the smartphone, I admit that I don’t feel like learning because I have my old-generation phone which even if it is simple is fine with me”* (D. 75). This lack of willingness may be related to the fact that there is no motivation or strong input to learn, probably because one is not aware of the advantages that certain tools or innovations could bring.

All participants think that not enough attention is paid to befriending services and their aspects and they would like to have more initiatives of this kind available. All of the older persons involved would be interested in taking part in this type of activities, as long as they would be carried out in environments they already frequented and were easily accessible to them. Among the activities they might be interested in are games (cards, bingo, etc.), teaching knitting and crocheting, sharing life stories, talking about the past events, sharing meals and recipes, discussing news and current events, having a space to listen, reviewing and recounting places they have lived and known, and practising foreign languages or languages spoken in the past *“My wife and I got married in Paris and lived there for 27 years, so we know French well”* (L., 88).

All activities would be good if they took place in presence. Older persons involved considered themselves to be quite in agreement with the statement that befriending services could promote socialisation and would be an opportunity for recreation and getting to know new people. They also rather agreed that they would enhance active listening and empathy skills. Finally, they are unanimously totally interested in staying updated and participating in befriending services.

Conclusion

In order to promote the Befriending services, it's important to provide spaces and milieu that are dedicated to the elderly people, in which they can have the possibility to meet another people and socialize with them in a safety and comfortable environment. It would be better if these spaces are near their homes in order to improve the accessibility and to promote seniors' participation.

In Italy there are a lot of voluntary associations which provide different type of services targeted to the elderly people, they should collaborate with each other in order to develop a structured support network.

As regarding the e-learning course targeted to the young volunteers, it would be focus not only on theoretical knowledges about aging but also on the sharing of practical experiences and confrontation from peers. It would be interesting if some young volunteers with experience in the field of the Befriending services share their stories with young volunteers who have less experience. It's important to do awareness raising initiatives in the schools about the topic of the Befriending in order to enhance the youth involvement in these services dedicated to elderly people. Both from the interviews with seniors and the interviews with young people emerged a mutual interest in exchange of life stories, knowledges and customs. Indeed, the added value of the relationship between elders and youths is the exchange of different points of view about life, which come from people with completely different life stories. From this exchange both the elders and the youths can learn something that can enrich their personality.

Poland

Findings from the interviews with youth

There were three respondents in the youth study, ages 20, 25, and 28 (two female and one male). One respondent had a high school education, one a bachelor's degree and one a master's degree. All respondents had experience in volunteering - WOŚP, orphanage, Noble parcel. No one had experience volunteering for the elderly, only two people had cared for a family or neighbor. One person surveyed had heard of a specific organization - SeniorApp dealing with befriending services, the others have insufficient knowledge on this topic. To the question "What do you think motivates young people to participate in befriending services for elderly people?" there were different answers: "Definitely an opportunity to engage in useful activities that are much needed by others and are not very expensive for volunteers.

Each of us will be an elderly person someday...", "There are a lot of young people who get involved in various initiatives run by foundations - it's becoming more and more popular and normal", "The SeniorApp shows that there are a lot of seniors who need a variety of help and this certainly stimulates a lot of people to take action". Respondents see benefits for young people in helping seniors and strongly agree that training in communication or psychology is needed. Respondents point to a lack of information about organizations working in this area, and there is a lack of public campaigns, social media information.

All of the respondents strongly express their willingness to try to help the elderly by providing their company and volunteering their time. They believe that it would be beneficial for their skills development. The general conclusion is that unfortunately most of us do not notice or forget about the problems of elderly people who live alone and have no one to turn to for help. Often they may not want to ask for help, and during a pandemic one of the reasons was certainly the fear of getting sick.

Findings from the interviews with the elderly

There were three respondents in the elderly study, ages 66, 68, and 75 (two female and one male). Two respondents had a master's degree, one a bachelor's degree. The first respondent is retired and said that her family only helps her and that is enough. She has never heard of befriending services. She thinks there can be sheer benefits of such services for single people who, even without a pandemic, are struggling with many of the issues of daily life. She indicated concern about paying fees for befriending services. She has never heard of any befriending services for elderly people in her local community. In her opinion there are not enough intergenerational services in Poland. She has never used a befriending service, but in autumn and winter she would like to try the best befriending service, if the pandemic situation allows it. In her opinion the range of services should include shopping and other helpful daily life services.

The second respondent is also retired (she is 75 years old) and said that her neighbors help her. She has heard about befriending services on TV and thinks they are only available in large urban areas. She thinks befriending services would be very helpful, but "the barrier will definitely be the aversion to scammers and the fear of some problems. Older people do not like change". There are no befriending services for elderly people in her local community. When asked "Would you be interested in taking part in befriending services?" she replied that she has a hearing problem and as this can be a problem she is not sure if she would like to use such services.

The third respondent is a man aged 68, retired. He has received a Christmas basket several times from children who participated in an activity at school. He has heard of befriending services, can't remember their names and thinks they are for people over 75. If he were to use them, he would like the scope to be broader than just meeting with volunteers e.g. transportation to the doctor, help with shopping. He feels that there are not enough organizations of any kind providing services to the elderly. He spends a great deal of time alone, his family rarely visits him, they live far away. He would love to talk to someone or go for a walk in the park.

Conclusion

There were three respondents in the youth study. All respondents had experience in volunteering, but no one had experience volunteering for the elderly. One person surveyed had heard of a specific organization - SeniorApp dealing with befriending services, the others have insufficient knowledge on this topic. There were three respondents in the elderly study. They agreed that befriending services would certainly be helpful, as long as they were not costly. According to them, assistance for seniors in Poland is insufficient, certainly outside large urban areas. There is a lack of social campaigns and real help.

In order to improve befriending services in Poland, it seems crucial to reach young people through the information channels they use - namely social media. The SeniorApp also seems an ideal direction. In addition, social campaigns that appeal to young people and specific organizations focused on sustainable, long-term assistance are key.

Greece

Findings from the interviews with youth

Three young people took part in the interviews: a 24-year-old male with a Bachelor's degree in Psychology, a 23-year-old female with a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Psychology and Mental Health, and a 20-year-old female studying Dietetics Nutrition at a Vocational Training Institute. Two out of the three interviewees had no former volunteer experience or heard of befriending services before. Only one had volunteer experience and recently joined a befriending service for older people. Two participants highlighted personal experiences as motivation for young people to participate in such services and one added that youngsters may as well recognise the loneliness that older people experience.

Concerning the benefits of participating in befriending services, participants highlighted that the mere development of a befriending relationship is a significant benefit and added that it helps young people develop qualities and traits like respect and appreciation. Also, older people pass on their knowledge and experience to the younger people. Concerning the challenges, participants noted that there is a vast generation gap between younger and older people, but also practical issues, such as the service operating at a considerable distance from the person's residence, not being able to commute or online means being used. Another challenge mentioned was that older people may feel ashamed for not having family or friends and be reluctant to participate.

Participants said that the skills that young people need in befriending services include respect, understanding, flexibility, adaptability, ability and willingness to listen, patience, sensitivity. They emphasised interpersonal skills, such as kindness, friendliness, politeness, openness, and talkativeness. Thus, a training program for young people should cover communication skills, respect, empathy, and listening skills, and also *“technical and practical issues, such as how to behave towards older people, how to approach them, conversations or topics that you could initiate, or activities that you could engage them in”*.

All participants noted advertising befriending services as necessary. For younger people, advertising through social media would be essential to learn about such services. As for older people: *“If we use websites and social media, chances are we will not be able to reach them. But brochures given to places where older people usually encounter and phone calls may be more appropriate”*. Participants also suggested that informative sessions or events for young people informing them about these services or field trips to homes that take care of older people would be helpful.

Findings from the interviews with the elderly

The first participant was a 72-year-old female who used to work in public relations, marketing, and journalism. The second participant was a retired 75-year-old female who graduated high school and studied design in a vocational training institute. The third participant was a retired 63-year-old male who studied social work and had extensive work experience.

Two participants had not heard the term befriending services or used intergenerational services/support from young people before and were uncertain whether there are such services in Greece. One participant engaged in such services in the context of a European project abroad. All participants mentioned that there are multiple benefits in befriending services, including companionship, dialogue, psychological uplifting, the connection with another person, the exchange of experiences, and mutual learning. As for the obstacles, a serious one may be mobility problems for older people, boredom, lack

of motivation and many obligations, such as taking care of their grandchildren. A significant challenge is the lack of digital skills that could hinder online participation and last but not least, the generation gap.

Participants overall would be interested in participating in these services and would like to engage in activities such as visits to museums, exhibitions, theatre shows, walks, excursions, and trips, but also conversations, and the exchange of experiences. Moreover, one participant noted, *“Another thing that would be helpful would be for a young person to familiarise me with digital technology!”* adding that this would be interesting for many older people. Participants would not prefer telephone communication, but would enjoy having face to face contact with young volunteers. The third participant added that communication over the internet would be more accessible and convenient.

In order to make these services more attractive, the first step is for someone to learn that these services exist and what they may offer. They added that if there were announcements in the context of the project informing older people that “at this date and time the specific activity will take place”, older people would be motivated since they need to know what they will engage in. All participants noted that group activities and events that would bring older and younger people together, such as excursions or walks, should be the first step. One participant said that *“We could start from these groups to get to know each other and then progress to more personal relationships in dyads, choosing the ones from the group that suit you better to establish the befriending relationship with them.”*

Conclusion

The interviews conducted with younger and older people confirmed that befriending and intergenerational services are unfamiliar to most. Nonetheless, all interviewees believed that befriending services have a lot to offer to both younger and older participants, such as companionship and the fruitful exchange of knowledge and experience between generations. Related difficulties may include the so-called generation gap and practical issues, such as older people’s lack of digital skills, which will hinder their participation if befriending services are provided online. Participants highlighted that advertising befriending services using the appropriate means is necessary to make them more attractive; social media may be more appropriate for young volunteers, while brochures or TV commercials may be more suitable for older people. As for the type of communication interviewees preferred, most would choose face-to-face contact. Also, participants agreed that group activities and communication might be preferable to one-to-one, at least in the initiation phase.

To sum up, the research in Greece revealed that the provision of intergenerational befriending services among youth and older people in the national context was considered an innovative idea that would be extremely helpful and it was warmly welcomed by the participants interviewed. Thus, it is expected that the BONDING project and its results will largely benefit the stakeholders involved and enrich the existing services for older people’s inclusion and support in Greece.

Cyprus

Findings from the interviews with youth

CARDET team interviewed 7 young people, 4 females and 3 males, aged 20-30yrs, in Spring 2022. Young people provided answers to all questions, in both parts, and gave their consent for the data given to be reported for the purposes of BONDING project only.

Based on the data, in part I all young participants declared that they have volunteered before mainly for charity events when at schools, at the University and now at work. They have all volunteered with older people since they provide help and support to their grandparents, when needed.

Interestingly, they have never heard of befriending services before and they could not define these. They stated that they have never participated in befriending services and they were not aware of any befriending services for elderly people in their local communities. They could not report any challenges/obstacles in involving an older person in a befriending service. As for the skills that they think that young people need in order to be able to participate effectively in befriending services for the elderly, the participants stated the following skills: good listening skills, be respectful, understanding, patient, tolerant, well-prepared and creative. It was also pointed out that young people should love the elderly. To them, befriending services may become more attractive through the social media (FaceBook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.), network, funding, expertise/ specialists and good/ quality services. But first, they need to be well-defined: *“they need to be known, people need to know about them, what they are, what they do and why they are important and useful?”* (YP7).

The CY-based young people agreed that they enjoy helping elderly people. They stated that becoming a befriender of an older person can be a useful way to learn new things, befriending an older person can help them develop their skills, befriending can help them meet new people and socialize, and befriending can increase empathy and active listening. They stated that they would like to learn more about befriending and that they would like to be part of a befriending service.

In part II, the participants stated that in a training programme for young people interested in engaging in befriending services, the following topics should be included, from their point of view:

- Active Listening
- Respect
- Needs of elderly people
- Postive psychology for elderly people
- Inclusiion
- Supporting the Elderly
- Effective communication amongst the ages
- Co-create with differnet ages
- Needs of humans amongst the ages.
- Existing together, living together

Findings from the interviews with the elderly

CARDET team interviewed 7 elderly people, 4 females and 3 males, aged 70-80yrs, in Spring 2022. Elderly people provided answers to all questions, in both parts, and gave their consent for the data given to be reported for the purposes of BONDING project only.

Based on the data, in part I all elderly participants declared that they have never had the opportunity to use any services from young people. They declared that they have never heard of befriending services before and they did not know (3 out of 7) or were not sure (2 out of 7) if there are benefits from befriending services. However, two participants guessed that by that, we mean “Helping the elderly and the elderly helping the your (EP5) or “Support and help” (EP7).

As for the challenges/obstacles in involving an older person in a befriending service, most elderly people did not know (3 out of 7) or were not sure (2 out of 7) and only two mentioned “health problems/ issues” (EP5 and EP6).

Interestingly the elderly people were not aware of any befriending services for elderly people in their local community and they did not know if there are enough intergenerational services. They said they have never participated in a befriending services, but they would you be interested in taking part in befriending services. The kind of socializing activities that they would like to do with the youth befriender are the following:

- Shared activities (all)
- Human communication and contact
- Cooking (4 out of 7)
- Watch films (3 out of 7)
- Playing cards or other games together (e.g. chess) (2 out of 7)
- Watch TV
- Watch Netflix together
- Sewing together
- Knowledge share on mobiles and technology
- Teaching how to (mobile, cooking, etc.)
- Chatting
- Listening to music together

They said they prefer face to face communication If, yes, what form of communication would you prefer (e.g., face to face, via telephone, via the Internet)?

When asked how can befriending services become more attractive to elderly people, 5 out of 7 replied that they do not know, whereas 3 out of 7 stressed the following: “*be enjoyable* (EP-4), “*meeting their needs and interests*” (EP-5) and “*needs-based*” (EP-6).

The CY-based young people agreed that they enjoy helping elderly people. They stated that becoming a befriender of an older person can be a useful way to learn new things, befriending an older person can help them develop their skills, befriending can help them meet new people and socialize, and befriending can increase empathy and active listening. They stated that they would like to learn more about befriending and that they would like to be part of a befriending service.

In part II, the elderly participants agreed that:

- Befriending will stimulate companionship and conversation
- Befriending will be a chance for new leisure opportunities
- Befriending can help me meet new people and socialize
- Befriending can increase empathy and active listening
- They would like to learn more about befriending

- They would like to be part of a befriending service

Conclusion

All in all befriending is unknown and uncommon to young and elderly people in the Cypriot context. Participants from both groups do not know what it is and how to define it and are not aware of the challenges and relevant services examples. Both groups stated however that they would like to know more about it and they emphasized the significance of togetherness, highlighting the significance of working, being and enjoying together (young and old people).



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