

Active I

Healthy Active Living for Seniors

Active Ageing Centre Set-up Manual

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1) Active I – Healthy Active Living for Seniors – Framework and project philosophy

The ageing population of Europe is one of the most important social and economic challenges of the twenty-first century. This concerns all the countries of the European Union and many of its policies.

By 2025, more than 20% of Europeans will be aged 65 or older, with a significant increase in the number of people over the age of 80¹.

Active and healthy ageing is a challenge all European countries are facing. The project Active I fits into this context, promoting a healthy lifestyle that is based on three main aspects – physical activity, nutrition and mental well-being – in order to promote social relations and the pleasure of being active together, paying attention to the value of changing unhealthy habits and the possibility for everyone to modify them.

To achieve these objectives, the project consortium has produced several outcomes which you can find more information on for download via the website:

- A research report, 'Active I Needs Analysis', describing the needs of seniors for the key components of a healthy active living programme;
- Created and implemented the 'Healthy Active Living Course for Seniors';
- Designed the online personal healthy living planner 'Plan 50+', which has been made available for thousands of seniors and uses graphical representations of goals, progress and achievements;
- Started active ageing campaigns;
- Organised a major sport event for seniors, 'Sport 50+', in Krakow.

The project Active I represented the perfect opportunity to reflect on existing activities and opportunities aimed at seniors and organisations working with this target audience. However, for older adults and organisations working in the field of active ageing, a large number of initiatives, projects and campaigns lack a background of both content and materials that deal with the dissemination of healthy and active lifestyles.

¹ *Strategia e piano d'azione per l'invecchiamento sano 2012/2020 - Ministero della Salute, Dipartimento Sanità Pubblica e delle Innovazioni.*

The project 'Active I - Healthy Active Living for Seniors', funded by the Grundtvig programme, had a duration of three years (November 2014 – April 2016), during which the project partners have produced various materials and activities (see an overview above and a more detailed description below).

Starting from the Needs Analysis, we have created the 'Healthy Active Living Course for Seniors', a training course lasting 60 hours aimed at older adults, based on three aspects – physical activity, nutrition, and mental well-being – in order to change unhealthy behaviours and promote healthy and active lifestyles.

Four project partners (Ireland, Italy, Poland and Spain) have implemented the course for older adults in two streams, involving more than one hundred participants in four different European Union countries. In order to make the course accessible to older adults, a training session for Active I instructors was planned and carried out in Germany. The materials that we produced include both a rough and a detailed plan of the course activities (see course materials and Appendix 2) with the necessary materials (Appendix 1 and 3), as well as post-course guidelines with tips from instructors and preconditions for the implementation of the course. All these manuals are aimed at educators and organisations who want to organise and continue to spread the ideas and methods tested in these three years of the project. You can find all materials on the Active I project websites <http://www.active-i.eu/en/start.html> and <http://www.plan50plus.eu/home>. The course material is available in four different languages (English, Italian, Polish, and Spanish).

In this document ('Active Ageing Centre Set-up Manual'), you will find a framework that contains ideas and guidelines for the construction of a space as well as reflections on the various methods of promoting active ageing. This guide is one of the results of the EU-funded project 'Active I – Healthy Active Living for Seniors' and aims to help and guide all who wish to start an Active I path.

Active ageing aims to promote the idea that older people are members of society in all respects, both in professional and personal terms. They have an active role in our communities, and thus the health of older adults is very important. Health is not only understood in terms of physical health, but also seen as 'a resource for everyday life' that emphasises 'social and personal resources as well as physical capacities'².

² *World Health Organization. (2009). Milestones in Health Promotion. Statements from Global Conferences. p.1 Geneva: WHO.*

Taking care of an elderly person requires taking small steps day-to-day and experimenting with techniques and methodologies that facilitate an active lifestyle and a healthy diet, as well as attention to interpersonal relationships and the rediscovery of the inner self, to support active ageing. Elderly people, when confronted with changes in their physical and emotional state, often struggle to remain independent for a certain period of time. Active ageing allows people to manage their lives and age with dignity.

In this guide, you will find some suggestions and tips to help you manage, create and launch an Active Ageing Centre. In these pages we will focus mainly on the content and characteristics an Active Ageing Centre should have. The guide is based on the profound experiences the Active I partnership gained during the three years of project implementation.

2) Themes, areas and basic conditions for the launch of an Active I Ageing Centre

In this section, we will focus on three main features of an Active Ageing Centre, which follow the methodology and philosophy of the Active I project.

2.1) What is an 'Active Ageing Centre'?

When we think of an Active Ageing Centre, it is easy to think of a physical facility, created from scratch, to host activities for older adults. In our case, we mean both a physical place and an overall way of thinking, acting and working on a method to develop habits that help people age in a healthy and active way. For this reason, the Active Ageing Centre has professional staff capable of supporting participants throughout the formative work path. The trainers/instructors will be able not only to follow a programme that has been tested and improved over the years of the project, but also to adjust and adapt it to the needs of the participants.

An Active Ageing Centre is a space that enables elderly people to improve their lifestyle by working on changing small habits and by placing emphasis on doing things together, thus enhancing the beneficial effects on the mind and body. It provides social activities as well as shared goals and spaces in order to help elderly people rediscover the pleasure of movement and to give them a chance to experience new things and meet new people. Older adults will have the opportunity to work on reducing their own limitations and maintaining or building up their strengths, and will be able to improve their health to achieve personal and group goals.

On the following pages, you will find the basis on which the methodology and philosophy of the Active I project are built as well as the starting points for the creation of an Active Ageing Centre that combine the experience of this three-year project and its possibilities for development.

2.2) Physical activity, nutrition and mental well-being: meanings and developments

The planning of this project was based on three interrelated key areas that are addressed throughout the sessions of the course and will provide older adults with adequate mechanisms and tools to initiate a change in their health behaviours from a passive to an active attitude:

- **Physical activity:** Being physically active has many benefits for health, such as a lower risk of chronic diseases, fall prevention, and higher levels of functional health, cognitive function and well-being. The good news is that it is never too late to start being physically active and to benefit from physical activities in daily life. There are many sport disciplines, such as jogging, dancing, swimming, biking or ball sports, and each older adult will have to find out which discipline is most suitable for them. However, one can also stay physically active by doing other daily activities such as walking or cycling instead of using a car, taking the stairs instead of the lift, doing household chores and gardening. Elderly people have to find out what kind of activities they like so that they can integrate more physical activities into their daily lives and reduce the time spent sitting down each day (sedentary lifestyle). Sport and physical activities can give much pleasure, and often bring people together. One can either become active together with friends, family or neighbours, or one can just meet new people. It pays off to start being more active and to try new things!
- **Nutrition:** The eating behaviours of older adults are influenced by many factors. Some of the factors influencing the intake of everyday meals are basic knowledge of dietary recommendations, cultural characteristics, individual preferences and aversions, health status, current living conditions, and established eating habits. The Active I project aims to support older adults in recognising their own nutrition-related behavioural patterns and to provide new ideas for maintaining or improving their nutritional status, which is an important element of well-being and satisfaction in old age. This includes not only a balanced diet and an adequate energy and nutrient intake, but also the (re-)establishment of dining culture, pleasure and sociability.

- **Mental wellbeing:** Mental wellbeing means sharpness of wit and a self awareness that is conducive to better physical safety, and is associated with a better overall mood. Mindfulness is part of mental wellbeing and is more a process than a cognitive intervention – it greatly enhances peace of mind and enables a fuller engagement in the here and now. It is very good for releasing stress, and well-known for its positive effects on people who suffer from high blood pressure. Mindfulness is made up of simple mental focusing exercises to improve concentration and release stress, including gentle breathing exercises that promote health within the body and mind. It is easy to learn and do, and is highly regarded by medical professionals because of its well-documented positive effects.

One key part of mental wellbeing is its psycho-relational component that is based on empowerment – both personal and in the group – and on the development of soft skills. The goal is to develop and bring out the personal resources of each person, and to work on sociability and ability, not only to get along with others but also to rethink ourselves with advancing age and in changing habits. Mental well-being is linked to emotions and sharing with others, as well as the ability to understand one's mood and having the strength to change it, improving one's social circle to enhance quality of life and developing tools to combat depression and loneliness.

2.3) The importance of social integration: creating shared spaces in order to combat loneliness and depression.

Loneliness and depression are a common problem for many seniors and are often caused by the loss of a functional role in society, by bereavement or by chronic illnesses, especially those that limit physical and/or mental performance³. This is why it is important to create spaces that can break down these issues and encourage healthy behaviours. Being with other people and sharing happy moments is the basis of social and relational well-being, which has a beneficial effect on both the body and mind.

³ *La terapia dell'ansia e della depressione nell'anziano* CLAUDIO VAMPINI(1), CESARIO BELLANTUONO(2)
(1)Dipartimento per la Salute Mentale, Ospedale Civile Maggiore, Verona (2)Sezione di Psichiatria - Unità di Psicofarmacologia Clinica - Dipartimento di Medicina e Sanità Pubblica, Università di Verona

Organisers can work with the following activities, which can be carried out even with small groups:

- Playing simple group games with few rules. These can either be competitive games that enhance the sense of team and competitive spirit, or cooperative games, which strengthen the group and enable everyone to find their place within it;
- Playing board games that involve all levels of difficulty and can be adapted to all levels of education. This will allow everyone to enjoy the pleasure of each other's company and not to feel uncomfortable with a lack of education. You can either bring games you own or make up suitable games for the participants;
- Focusing on pleasure, not on duty. Proposed activities should not be obligatory – we must always remember that we are promoting well-being, and give each person time to engage with the group;
- Becoming a Learning Centre for specific skills or topics of interest;
- Encouraging the uptake of new hobbies by inviting guest speakers and providing instruction on how to start;
- Organising and carrying out voluntary community activities;
- Offering short courses that introduce participants to a foreign language;
- Encouraging brain fitness;
- Organising lectures on topics related to popular traditions, traditional cuisine, or global and local history;
- Hiking and trekking.

To be able to work on social inclusion, it is essential that people feel at ease and can find a warm and friendly atmosphere within the space chosen for activities.

2.4) Which kinds of venue, facilities and materials are most suitable, and what are their characteristics?

When you begin to plan for an Active Ageing Centre, one of the things you will need to focus on is the choice of locations, venues and equipment appropriate to the target you want to address. When planning your location, activities, and equipment, consider the special physical requirements of the different age groups that will attend.

While looking for a suitable location, please always consider:

- **Accessibility:** This is defined as 'the possibility, even for people with reduced or impaired motor or sensory abilities, to reach a building and its individual units and locations, to enter easily and to use its facilities and equipment with adequate security and autonomy provided.'⁴ Having a place that is easily accessible on foot or via public transport facilitates participation. But accessibility also means using a facility that does not have architectural barriers that create an impediment or restriction to certain users (buildings with too many stairs and no lifts or escalators). Keeping in mind that old age may cause mobility issues or disability, having a facility that takes into account these characteristics will ensure that no-one will be excluded from participating.
- **Comfort:** Create a space that is friendly and pleasant. To enable participants to perform tasks that require concentration and the abandonment of inhibition, it is important that the building has an adequate heating or cooling system so that the temperature can be adjusted as needed, allowing participants to carry out activities in complete freedom without suffering from the discomfort of being too cold or too warm.
- **Diversification:** The work programme of the Active I project is based on the ability to perform the activities provided in purpose-specific areas (physical activity in gyms, nutrition via the use of a kitchen, etc.). Having a building or several buildings to provide separate spaces allows you to give the participant a more complete experience. It is therefore necessary to have:
 1. Adequate space for physical activity (e.g. a gym, a sports hall or sports centre);
 2. A kitchen (that is in line with the rules of national health and safety and can accommodate a class in comfortably);

⁴ Article 2, letter g, of the Italian Ministerial Decree no. 236 of 1989 defines accessibility. Italian Ministry of Health.

3. A space for group work (a meeting room that provides the proper equipment, such as tables, chairs, flip charts, etc.) that provides participants not only with comfort and support for writing, but which also makes it possible to work in a circle;
4. A comfortable and appropriate space for meditation (e.g. an area with parquet flooring or suitable for using pillows and mats);
5. An area for reception that can be used as a space for socialising before activities.

An aspect not to be underestimated is the choice of materials used for the activities. It is important that all the material used is certified and suitable for the users. It is important to double-check any object that is used, paying particular attention to the tools for physical activity and the equipment for the kitchen.

2.5) Trainers/instructors: guidelines, tips and basic skills for staff

In the planning phase of an Active Ageing Centre, it is important to pay particular attention to those who will carry out the activities with the elderly.

Following the recommendations of the Active I Needs Analysis (2014, p. 138)⁵, the instructors of a train-the-trainer course should have at least:

- An academic degree in one of the following areas:
 - sport and exercise science (degree: Bachelor's or Master's),
 - nutritional science or ecotrophology (degree: Bachelor's or Master's),
 - health science (degree: Bachelor's or Master's)* with courses/modules specially designed for working with older people,
 - gerontology (degree: Bachelor's or Master's);
- Experience as a trainer in the fields of physical activity, nutrition and/or mental well-being/relaxation;
- Experience working with older people (physical activity trainer for older adults, cooking classes, social worker);

The instructors of a train-the-trainer course will be able to train more instructors based on the course methodology.

The participants in the train-the-trainer course should have at least:

- A trainer/exercise instructor certification in the field of physical activity with a focus on physical activity for older adults (health exercise, exercise in prevention, exercise in rehabilitation, exercise in therapy);
- A trainer/instructor license in mental well-being/relaxation with a focus on relaxation methods for older adults;
- An educational background in nutrition for older adults;
- Experience as a trainer in the field of physical activity, nutrition or mental well-being/relaxation;
- Experience working with older adults.

If the course is conducted by three instructors, there should be one expert responsible for each specific field. This means there should be one expert in physical activity, nutrition, and mental well-being respectively.

If courses are being delivered by only two instructors, it is preferable that at least one of the instructors is an expert in physical activity, as physical activity is included every day of the course.

In addition to the previously-mentioned information, remember also:

- **Qualification:** the Active I train-the-trainer course does not substitute a qualification, so it is important that the staff you choose have a certification showing their studies in physical activity or nutrition, or experience working with the elderly (as explained above);
- **Listening:** When working with this age group, it is important to pay attention to any sign that the group sends, whether it's a strain not recognised or a malaise not revealed. 'Active listening' is a fundamental characteristic of analysing not only the environment, but also the individual and the group as a whole. If the instructor/trainer finds a harmony with the group and listens to their feedback, results will be positive.

⁵ Active I Needs Analysis research report. (2014). Available online: <http://www.plan50plus.eu/results.html>

- **Facilitation:** The facilitator is a professional role with the aim to support, encourage and stimulate through activities, reflections and questions to the group. The facilitator should be able to move from where the group or a single person is to where they would like to be. The methodology of the facilitator places the individual at the centre of the relationship: by continually asking questions and using techniques and tools suitable to the participants' needs and circumstances, the facilitator brings to light the resources already present in the group⁶.
- **Flexibility:** It is important that the staff be able to adapt the training programme to the participants. Rigidity creates a barrier, while the ability to adapt exercises to each person's individual difficulties, not to focus on limitations, and to motivate those who fear failure, serves to ensure that the participants trust the trainer and feel comfortable and at ease in being guided through the experience and the process of changing habits.

2.6) Budget: What are the economic conditions for an Active I Ageing Centre (the importance of territorial networks and public bodies, which parts require a financial investment)?

Ultimately, we come to a very important aspect: the budget. It is clear that there is not a definite financial figure to allow the launch of an Active Ageing Centre, as it varies depending on the context, but in this part, we will explore some of the most important variables.

What are the costs that you have to keep in mind?

- Cost for the rental of the places that you will use (gyms, swimming pool, kitchens, halls, etc.);
- Cost of materials (be it purchase or rental);
- Cost of personnel (management staff/secretary, instructors/trainers, specialists, etc.);
- The cost of any insurance/safety consulting;
- Costs for promotional activities (production of information materials, promotional meetings and information, etc.).

⁶ *Le caratteristiche del lavoro del facilitatore di Pino De Sario - Psicologo sociale e formatore, membro associato e docente presso la Società Italiana di Biosistemica, insegna Metodi di facilitazione nei gruppi presso le Università di Siena, Firenze e Pisa. Da anni lavora nelle organizzazioni sia come formatore che consulente per la facilitazione di riunioni e tavoli di concertazione. Approfondisce i temi della comunicazione ecologica, dell'action learning e della gestione della negatività. Autore per FrancoAngeli di: Vivere l'ecologia (1999), Non solo parole (2002), Professione facilitatore (2005), Il facilitatore dei gruppi (2006). http://www.corem.unisi.it/bibliografia/recensioni/articolo_de_sario_Il_avoro%20del%20fac..pdf*

You need also to consider the costs of training staff, if they are not already in line with the guidance provided in the paragraphs above.

One thing not to be underestimated is the local context in which the project falls. In order to reduce costs, it is important to create a network with those stakeholders who may have an interest in the project – these may be public entities (regions, provinces, municipalities, agencies for health care) that may be able to provide resources (economic or structural), but also associations and groups who are already working in the field of the elderly. The latter may not only be partners and support the project, but could be excellent channels of promotion within their activities and their centres.

It is essential that this type of project be included in the local context where it develops so that you can enjoy the benefits that the partner network could provide. It is therefore important to know what a locality already offers and understand how the project can be incorporated into this.

3) Be safe and feel safe: security for those who promote the activities and for those who participate.

Before starting any kind of business, it is important to think about safety aspects. Being safe means being able to work in complete safety and to have verified and collected all the information and material concerning the safety of the space, facilities, materials and people. Being safe makes you feel confident that you can do all sorts of activities with ease. Therefore, you have to remember that:

- It is important to ensure that the facilities and spaces that you want to use are in compliance with applicable health and safety laws (always check that you have emergency exits and the equipment needed to manage risks: fire extinguishers, first aid boxes, etc.).
- Depending on the legal framework in each country, ensure that each participant either brings a medical certificate confirming that it is safe for them to take part in the course, or signs a release form, after having done a self-assessment, to confirm that they understand the risks of taking part in the course and will not hold the organisers liable should any illness or injury occur during the course;
- Make sure that the registration forms are fully filled in, especially the section on diseases;
- Equip yourself with an insurance that protects the personnel involved in the activities and the facilities used.

3.1) Communicative strategies:

Besides the bureaucracy, do not forget that work with the elderly requires that you take precautions to ensure that communication is facilitated and especially that messages and information are understood. There are steps that you can take to facilitate communication with the elderly and put them at ease:

1. **Take note of the person's health issues.** Some elderly people are suffering from disorders that involve a number of difficulties in speaking and understanding. Be sure of their status before engaging in conversation or delivering a test or a written text. For example, they may have hearing problems, problems with speech and memory loss, vision problems or difficulties due to their level of education. These factors make communication more difficult. Do also remember that chronological age is not always a true indicator of a person's health.

2. **Evaluate the place where you are talking.** Be sure to evaluate the environment, as it could be a barrier to communication. Is there any distracting background noise? Are there many people speaking in the same room? Is there music playing? Are there any distractions that could disturb communication? Ask the elderly person if they feel at ease. If they feel discomfort, try to move somewhere more peaceful and quiet.
3. **Speak clearly and establish eye contact.** The elderly may suffer from hearing disorders, so it is important to articulate and pronounce words clearly. Look directly at the person you are talking to – not to the side. Do not slur your words: move your lips and pronounce each word carefully and precisely. When the tongue 'dances' inside the mouth, it means that you are expressing yourself more clearly. If the tongue is 'sleeping' and plays a passive role, it is likely that you are not articulating sounds well.
4. **In written texts, be careful to use suitable fonts and language.** It is important to use a plain typeface and a large font size (e.g. 14 or 18) and double spacing, as this makes the text more comprehensible even in the case of visual impairments due to old age. It is equally important to use language that is simple and clear – use few turns of phrase and avoid terms that are too complex.
5. **Adjust the tone of voice properly.** There is a difference between shouting and speaking loudly. Try to adapt your voice to the needs of the person you are speaking to. Assess the environment and what impact it has on the person's hearing ability. Do not shout simply because the listener is older. Treating the individual with respect means articulating and speaking in a tone of voice that is appropriate for both parties.

6. **Speak and ask questions clearly and concisely.** Do not hesitate to repeat or rephrase sentences and questions if you notice that they were not well understood. Questions and complex sentences can confuse older adults who have a short memory or who have hearing problems. Clearer and more concise statements and questions are easier to assimilate.
 - *Use direct questions: 'Did you eat soup for lunch?', 'Did you eat salad for lunch?' instead of: 'What did you eat for lunch?' The more specific you are, the less difficulty elderly people will have in understanding you.*
 - *Reduce unnecessary words in phrases and questions. Limit phrases and questions to 20 words or less. Do not use dialect or interjections ('well' and 'you know' are just a couple of examples). Your sentences must be concise and to the point.*
 - *Avoid the overlapping of ideas and questions. Try to organise your thoughts and questions in a logical manner. If you combine too many concepts, it may confuse some older people. Give one idea and one message at a time. For example, 'It's a good idea to call Charles, your brother. Later, we might call Paola, your sister'. A more complex construction would be: 'I think we should call your brother, Charles, first and then maybe later we could think about calling your sister, Paola, too.'*
7. **If possible, use visual aids.** If an elderly person has hearing or memory problems, it is important to be creative. Visual aids help. Show the person what or whom you're talking about. For example, it might be better to say, 'Do you have back pain?' while pointing to your back or 'Do you have a pain in your stomach?' while pointing to your stomach, instead of simply asking 'Do you feel any pain?'
8. **Slow down, be patient and smile.** A sincere smile shows that you are an understanding person. Create a loving atmosphere. Remember to take breaks between phrases and questions. Give the person the opportunity to understand and assimilate the information and questions. This is a technique especially valuable if a person is suffering from memory loss. When you take a break, it demonstrates respect and patience.

It is important not to forget a person's heritage and traditions – being aware of these factors creates an advantage in communication, while ignoring them could lead to misunderstandings.

4) How to involve older adults

An important aspect for the construction of an Active Ageing Centre is to take care of the target group. This means it is essential to address the different stages of information, reception and motivation of the target audience.

In this section we have a number of suggestions and strategies to help you involve older adults.

4.1) Strategies and techniques: How to generate interest, how to welcome participants and how to keep their attention.

A fundamental question we should be asking is 'How can we spark interest among older people?' There are many programmes and initiatives that involve older adults in many ways including ones dedicated to physical well-being and social life. Our target group is divided into two categories: active and inactive older adults. Those who belong to the first category are generally used to participating in courses and activities, and attending specialised centres. The second category, inactive people, are those who are less used to getting involved and participating, and thus are more difficult to engage and more suspicious. Here are some strategies for involving older adults:

- **Experience:** It is important that those who have already had a similar experience can be an inspiration to those who have never participated. This promotes the lowering of mistrust in something new.
- **Finding appropriate channels of communication:** For example, form agreements with medical centres, geriatricians and physiatrists, and ensure that they promote our activities to their patients. Gyms, associations, and other organisations working with older adults can also be involved in promotion.
- **Provide a trial meeting:** To lower older adults' distrust, we propose a trial lesson that might arouse the curiosity of participants and generate interest by explaining what the objectives and contents of the course are, playing games, doing exercises or introducing the topics of the course.
- **Have informative meetings in places frequented by older people:** Approaching them in familiar places may reduce the fear of the new and allows for an initial meeting with the instructors/trainers. Involve the network of people who already work with or take care of the elderly to make introduction easier.

An equally important step is welcoming the participants. Giving a good first impression will ensure that they continue the path, so remember:

- Pay attention to detail when setting up the first meeting. Set up the space and make it comfortable. This ensures a good first impression;
- Present yourselves as welcoming and ready to answer any questions they may have;
- Put participants at ease, do not force them to do things they don't want to do, and do not make judgements, but show appreciation for their participation;
- Generate a good group atmosphere; make sure that there is harmony among the participants. Avoid friction and take care to create a feeling of pleasantness and enjoyment in the group;
- Important: even the trainer/instructor is part of the group, just in a different role, and he/she determines the atmosphere.

Last but not least is the phase of follow-up. Always remember to check at the end of each meeting what the atmosphere of the group is and spend some time trying to understand what were the strengths (what older adults liked most) and weaknesses (what they liked least) of each meeting. Find something that creates a sense of belonging, a sort of 'ritual' (a song, a game, an activity, etc.) that gives an identity to the group. It is also important that you are always aware of the reasons for absence; take care of your participants without being too intrusive.

4.2) Good practice and suggestions from the partners involved in the management of Active I

From the experience gained during the project, especially from practical experience gained by the partners and trainers involved in the two streams of the course for older adults, different strategies and best practices have been developed to improve and lead the project in the best way.

The following are a number of points that come from the work done over three years of the project by the partners who have conducted the course.

What kind of communication did you use and what communication media have been most effective?

- Direct communication was the most effective. We sent information to our members, employees, friends, and clients. They informed their parents or other seniors.
- We established a network with seniors' organisations (e.g. NGOs, Third Age Universities, administrative bodies responsible for seniors' policy). They were engaged in distributing information.
- We used local media like newspapers and radio. Because the project was a social one, the price for advertisement was very economical.
- We also used social media channels (mainly Facebook); for some groups of seniors (especially the youngest ones), this was the most effective way of being informed.

During the first recruitment process, after three days of promotion activities, we had more than 80 seniors interested in participating in the Active I project!

- Visit local seniors' clubs and do a presentation there about your course.
- Get seniors' ambassadors — people who have already participated in healthy active living courses — who can promote them among their friends and relatives.
- Word of mouth – the more people you talk to, the more will help you promote your courses.
- Advertise in a local or regional newspaper or in magazines dedicated to seniors.

What strategies have you used to welcome the group and how did you keep up the motivation to participate?

- The first meeting was always organised in our main classroom, to let our seniors get to know the place and us;
- Start with the 'getting to know each other' session and let all of the participants speak as long as they want;
- Introduce the whole team of trainers, let each trainer explain their role and prepare a presentation of the programme;

- Healthy food and some fun exercises are also a good idea for the first meeting;
- During the welcoming part, it is also essential to explain the rules, timetables and all important issues regarding the course participation;
- Ensure ongoing evaluation of the seniors' opinions about the course activities. If there are any suggestions, you should acknowledge them. You don't always have to introduce changes, but at least explain your position to the group;
- Diversity of the programme: Make sure that there is something for everyone;
- Keeping up motivation is the responsibility of the trainers, so it is crucial to choose trainers who have knowledge and experience in this area;
- Make the participants 'an integral part of the course', e.g. by involving them in teaching. In Ireland, one of the participants was an Irish dance teacher who had a chance to teach other seniors during the course;
- Be sensitive to participants' needs and adapt your course accordingly.

5) Conclusions: Feedback from partners involved in the Active I training course

Based on the experiences of the partners involved in Active I Courses, you can find some suggestions below to help you conduct the activities and the construction of an Active Ageing Centre:

- Offer various kinds of courses in terms of participants, exercise programs, etc.

For example:

A course for the 'young-old' – people aged 50-65, and a course for those aged 65+, or

- a course conducted outdoors or indoors
- a course focusing on simple objects – elasticated bands or ropes or sticks
- a course for older adults with their grandchildren
- a course for older adults with their spouses;
- The best way to start is to examine people's expectations of the course and to correct them if they are wrong;
- Always remember safety precautions! Make sure you are doing everything to prevent falling, hurting, etc;
- A common mistake: correcting too much. Let people make mistakes (as long as it is not dangerous). Furthermore, encourage them to make mistakes – nobody is perfect! We all make mistakes!

5.1) Based on the Active I experience, within your situation and location, do you have a few suggestions for those who want to start an Active I course?

- The diversity and the complexity of the programme is the most important aspect of the Active I course: physical activity, nutrition and mental well-being are the key subjects;
- Offer various kinds of courses in terms of participants, exercise programmes, etc. There are some examples listed in the previous section;
- Adapt the course to participants' needs, e.g. if you get a very active and fit group offer them more challenging exercises to motivate them;
- It is good to start the course with pleasant activities, both physical and mental, and to welcome the group with healthy food;
- Manage expectations as much as possible;
- Make participants feel comfortable. Be there to listen.

What is the most important thing to remember?

- You should never forget the safety of the group. Another important thing is to keep up constant communication with the participants, to remind them about the next meeting and the subject;
- Always remember safety precautions! Make sure you are doing everything to prevent participants from falling, hurting themselves, etc. Support participants who need assistance.
- Be present and reactive; a good observer knows when it's time to take a break or stop an activity;
- Be available and flexible to the needs of the individual and the group. Working in pairs is always useful, as it helps to understand and support the group of participants better;
- Listen to the participants. There is always something more to learn from working with others;
- An Active Ageing Centre should have spaces to share good practice and suggestions to improve the training process.

