

## // For immediate release

### How to become an age-friendly city? Practical outcomes from a new ESPON study

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#### Is your city age-friendly?

In an age-friendly city, inhabitants of all ages can live a happy life and enjoy a high quality of life at an advanced age. Different ways in which cities can become more age-friendly were researched in *the ESPON ACPA Targeted Analysis on age-friendly cities, supporting the WHO Decade of Healthy Ageing*

The start of the Decade of Healthy Ageing (2020-2030) is accompanied by the Corona crisis. COVID-19 has hit our whole society, but older people in particular. The crisis has shown us that there is still much to improve in older people's resilience and the environment that should enable them to age healthy and actively.

During the last year, the [ESPON project ACPA](#) uncovered different age-friendly policies from eight stakeholder cities in Europe. The final result describes good practices and policy recommendations at a European level and for the individual stakeholders' cities. The final results are released today and include the [main report, the synthesis report](#) with overarching recommendations, a [policy handbook](#) with practical, inspiring examples for urban authorities that deal with ageing populations, eight case studies of the stakeholder cities ([Amsterdam](#), [Barcelona](#), [Gothenburg](#), [Greater Manchester](#), [Hengelo](#), [Nantes](#), [Oslo](#) and [Zaragoza](#))

#### How can a city become age-friendly? Recommendations from the ESPON ACPA study

**A holistic approach:** Age-friendly policies are an integrated whole. This is one of the main conclusions of the ESPON research on age-friendly cities. Policy initiatives generally cover multiple domains and have clear connections to multiple themes. A holistic and cross-sectoral perspective enables local authorities to see the full picture of age-friendly practices. When one organises social activities, it is important that people can reach these activities, so venues should be accessible and public transport should function properly. And enabling older people to exercise and get around, prevents health issues at later stages in life.

**Ambition:** cities should develop a long-term strategy towards 2030. Many cities currently do not have such a strategy yet. It should link their vision to strategic and tactical goals – ensuring stability and a higher probability of steady change. Furthermore, such a strategy should acknowledge the urban dimension of ageing, paying attention to issues such as differences between neighbourhoods, scarcity of space and the diversity of stakeholders and population groups.

**Engagement:** active involvement of older people during the design and implementation of these policies is one of the keys to success. Getting a seniors' perspective on what improvements are needed is essential for the policy development process. Involvement of all relevant stakeholders is also key. Interest groups, civil society organisations, community workers, health organisations, leisure and sports facilities and restaurants should collectively develop the necessary long-term and holistic strategy. In the end, age-friendly policies should revolve around improving the quality of life for people of all ages.

**Commitment:** Political commitment and funding are determinants for the success of age-friendly policies. Initiatives are often fairly easy to set up as long as there is a political will to support these initiatives. For many cities, it helps to join one of the European and international networks on age-

friendly policies. A collective approach towards all relevant European institutions to highlight the importance of population ageing is also paramount. This assures the topic remains on the policy agenda and helps to structure the efforts towards becoming more age-friendly. Proper monitoring and evaluation of initiatives can also help to maintain political goodwill and momentum.

**Positivity:** raise public awareness about the different aspects of ageing. Ageing is sometimes seen very negatively and misunderstood. Ageism and negative stereotypes about ageing are problematic as they can constitute barriers to developing an age-friendly society.

**Information:** More should be invested to raise awareness across the whole society to understand what ageing means and how it can be supported. For instance, when shop keepers would know more about dementia, they may be better able to spot and counteract problems that dementia sufferers are coping with. And when younger generations are more aware of the precautions they can take to facilitate healthy and active ageing, they will profit from that directly, and society will profit from that indirectly through lower healthcare costs.

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Eight stakeholders from six countries asked ESPON to deliver evidence and policy recommendations on the effectiveness of policies and initiatives to develop age-friendly cities and initiatives that support "ageing in place". ACPA's results directly feed into the adaptation and development of policies and action plans related to age-friendly cities and social programmes including post-2020 cohesion policy.

#### Stakeholders:

- Greater Manchester Combined Authority/Greater Manchester Ageing Hub, UK (lead stakeholder)
- City of Hengelo, NL
- Barcelona City Council/Social Rights Department, ES
- The Public Health Service of Amsterdam, NL
- City of Gothenburg/Senior Gothenburg (City Development Unit for Elderly Affairs), SE
- City of Oslo/Section for Innovation and Implementation, NO
- City of Nantes, FR
- Zaragoza City Council, ES

#### Researcher team

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#### Note to the Editors

**ESPON** is the European Territorial Observatory Network that provides scientific analyses and advice for territorial and sectoral policies in a number of contexts including economy and finance, unemployment, foreign direct investment, circular and low-carbon economy, healthcare, migration, etc. **ESPON** supports the discussions on the future of EU policies, notably the Cohesion Policy, as well as the upcoming preparation for the next generation of strategies and programmes at national, regional and local scales. **ESPON** is co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund. More at: [www.ESPON.eu](http://www.ESPON.eu)

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