

**The European Union's CARDS Democratic  
Stabilisation programme**



**Achieving a better quality of  
life for older people through  
local and national action and  
regional co-operation**  
*Report of Regional Activities*



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## Preface by Todd Petersen, Chief Executive Officer, HelpAge International

The rapid social, economic and political transition which occurred in South East Europe following the end of conflict in the region ten years ago has left many older people in a very vulnerable position. A key component of the project which this publication is based upon was to seek the views and opinions of older people on their status, and, most critically, the actions they feel are necessary to improve it. As indicated in the situation analysis, older people consistently report a sense of disillusionment with societies that promised them a bright future in return for years of hard work. Equally disturbing is the feedback that older people experience widespread discrimination in relation to their socio-economic position, access to services such as healthcare and transport, and treatment by members of their own families and communities.

What awaits you in this publication is a vivid description of impressive, innovative actions on the part of older people, and, civil society groups and NGOs which work with them to tackle the barriers that obstruct the rights of older people and their ability to achieve a better quality of life. Active involvement of older people in forming self-help groups to promote social inclusion, provide access to health and legal services in collaboration with local government and to advocate for policy change is a major and strategic action used by the project. These achievements are even more impressive considering the backdrop of relatively recent turbulence that characterises the four countries in which this experience is based - Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia and Montenegro. To date the amount of literature on issues related to vulnerable older people in South East Europe is sparse, thus, this is another reason why this publication is so valuable.

The participatory approaches, self-help group and networking strategies, numerous lessons learned and policy recommendations that are described in the publication are the result of dedicated work by older people teaming up with HelpAge International partner organisations: The Albanian Association of Geriatrics and Gerontology, The Association for Psychological Help and Development of Voluntary Work (Osmijeh) based in Gračanica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Udruga MI based in Split, Croatia, Lastavica and Viktorija based in Belgrade and Kragujevac, Serbia and Montenegro respectively. HelpAge International wishes to express sincere gratitude for their outstanding commitment to this project, as well as to the many other civil society and governmental representatives that supported their work. HAI also is very grateful to the European Union's CARDS Programme for funding this programme and therefore making this exciting project possible. Most of all we wish to thank the truly outstanding group of older people who tirelessly work to improve the conditions in which they, and an increasing number of older people in South East Europe, find themselves in.



**Contents**

Background on the situation of older people in the region 5

Older people and civil society in the four project countries 7

Partner organisations 14

Project tools for tackling discrimination against older people 17

Project evaluation and learning 38

Recommendations 50

Annex 1 - List of consultation meetings with older people and NGOs,  
exchange visits and regional meetings 53

Annex 2 - Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and Berlin  
Ministerial Declaration: *A Society for All Ages in the UNECE Region*  
and Regional Implementation Strategy in the UNECE Region 54

References 62



Self-help group from Tirana on excursion AAGG, Albania.

## Background on the situation of older people in the region

According to older people who participated in consultation meetings<sup>1</sup>, in all four countries older people experience widespread discrimination in relation to their socio-economic position, access to services such as healthcare and transport, and treatment by members of their own families and communities.

Older people responded positively to being asked for their opinions and about the problems they face. For many older people participating in this project, this is the first time that anyone had asked them what they feel about their own situation and how it could be improved, and therefore for many, it was difficult to talk openly about their problems. Many older people feel let down by transition societies in the region and yet feel guilty complaining about their own situation when younger generations face widespread unemployment.

The situation for many across Eastern and Central Europe has improved over the last ten years, where European integration provided an incentive to governments. It is hoped that similar impact will occur in South East Europe as a result of the EU-accession process and other international action plans, particularly in relation to addressing the widespread inequalities and social exclusion facing particular vulnerable social and ethnic groups including older people. Even where national governments committed themselves to national poverty reduction there are still many older people living in their countries in pockets of extreme poverty. The impact on older people is often disproportionately high because younger generations migrate out of these areas in search of work.

In most parts of the region, older people do have access to a modest pension and in some cases, additional benefits for service in particular sectors and professions, however, arrears in pension payments were remarked upon during consultations. Older people are entitled to a limited number of free or heavily subsidised healthcare services and medicines that appear on lists compiled by ministries of health. In practice, older people in rural areas often have difficulties in accessing public services and increasing numbers of prescription drugs required by older people are too expensive because they are not on the lists of free or subsidised medicines. Moreover, many older refugees or returnees struggle to access their full benefit entitlements.

In addition to the socio-economic impacts of transition, older people consistently report a sense of disillusionment with societies that promised them a bright future in return for years of hard work. Now older people feel ignored and let down. National and local governments, NGOs and even families often fail to consider older people's needs and do not recognise the contribution that older people continue to make to their communities.

Some older people in the region found it easier to describe the threat to their rights and needs as 'disrespect'. They felt that the word 'discrimination' has legal implications that are either difficult to prove, or in some cases, are 'too strong' for the ingrained but at times, insidious undermining of older people's position through the practices of institutions and the behaviour of their communities.

Following in-depth consultations with older people in Eastern and Central Europe, including the CARDS countries of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro, HAI and partner organisations drafted a Declaration on older people's situation, which was presented to the UN Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid. Two older women from Bosnia and the (then) Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, also gave a presentation of their experiences at this Assembly. A publication outlining the situation of older people situation's in Eastern and Central Europe was launched to accompany this declaration at the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UN ECE) Inter-ministerial Conference on Ageing in Berlin in September 2002.

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<sup>1</sup> See Section 'Project tools for tackling discrimination against older people'.

The project objective and activities from which this publication results, were developed by NGO partners at a planning meeting in Ljubljana in July 2002, following a situational analysis with older people, of rights and barriers faced in the region. Through their work with disadvantaged older people, the partners identified project activities that would achieve change: demonstrating good practices, networking, mutual support and advocacy. As this publication will show, this process optimised local ownership, participation and sustainability.

The objective of the project was to strengthen civil society and to improve the quality of life of disadvantaged older people in the four CARDS project countries by enabling them to promote their rights as citizens and raise awareness of their situation and needs. This was achieved through the following stages and using project tools outlined in section 'Project tools for tackling discrimination against older people':

- Building capacity and networks of disadvantaged older people
- Tackling discrimination through local action
- Scaling up to national-level action
- Establishing regional contact, sharing and mutual learning.

This project developed a solid foundation for continuing activities to address discrimination against older people in the four CARDS countries and five other countries in South East Europe (Bulgaria, Macedonia, Moldova, Romania and Slovenia) on a HAI project entitled, 'Empowering disadvantaged older people to combat discrimination in South East Europe', supported by The Big Lottery Fund. This follow-on project will end in December 2007 and utilise lessons learnt from capacity-building older people's organisations in the CARDS countries, and enable the partners to continue work with older people to tackle discrimination faced by older people at local, national and regional levels.



Opening of the exhibition 'Handicrafts of the Golden Age' and promotion of a book by Milica Radovanović Lastavica, Serbia and Montenegro

## Older people and civil society in the four project countries

The first round of consultation meetings with older people across the region highlighted key areas in which older people felt their rights were not respected. The following section outlines some of the characteristics of older people's situation, civil society and policy making processes which older participants and project partners encountered in implementing the project activities. Table 1 illustrates the dramatic increase in the percentage of the population 60, 65 and 80 years of age or over in the four CARDS countries over the past 10 years and the increases which are projected through 2015.

**Table 1: Percentage of population 60, 65 and 80 years of age or over in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro from 1995 to 2015**

	1995			2000			2005			2010			2015		
	60	65	80	60	65	80	60	65	80	60	65	80	60	65	80
<b>Albania</b>	9.3	6.2	0.9	10.9	7.3	0.9	12.0	8.3	1.2	13.0	9.1	1.4	14.3	9.9	1.6
<b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	12.6	7.8	1.2	17.2	10.8	0.9	19.2	14.0	1.4	21.1	15.5	2.3	23.4	16.7	3.4
<b>Croatia</b>	19.8	13.4	2.2	21.7	15.5	2.1	22.1	17.2	2.9	23.7	17.4	3.9	25.8	18.7	4.8
<b>Serbia and Montenegro</b>	17.1	11.4	1.7	18.3	13.1	1.5	18.5	14.1	2.2	19.6	14.1	2.9	21.6	14.9	3.5

Source: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. World Population Prospects: The 2004 Revision. ESA/P/WP.193. 24 February 2005.

Regarding gender, the population of women 65 years or over is over 10 per cent greater than for men 65 years or over in Albania and Serbia and Montenegro. Similar data from the UN Economic Commission for Europe Gender Statistics Database was not available for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. It is assumed that a similar pattern exists for those two countries as is the case for Albania and Serbia and Montenegro.

**Table 2: Population 65+, Sex Distribution in Albania and Serbia and Montenegro, 1995 and 2000**

	1995		2000	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
<b>Albania</b>	56.77	43.23	56.56	43.44
<b>Serbia and Montenegro</b>	56.42	43.58	56.33	43.67

Source: UN Economic Commission for Europe Gender Statistics Database 2005.

## Albania

Albania is the youngest of the Balkans countries, with nearly half the population under 25 and a 'bulge' of middle-aged persons (the baby-boomers of the 1960s). Although traditional values place a high value on older people and families, older people consulted report that they are increasingly considered a burden by younger generations. The situation of older people varies considerably between rural and urban areas. In urban areas, older people lack social networks and experience widespread loneliness; in rural areas older people highlight particular problems relating to poverty and a lack of access to services, particularly healthcare.

Throughout Albania, the second poorest country in Europe, older people feel the sharp end of poverty because pensions are low and increasingly, families and communities can not be relied upon to provide material support.

*'8 members of my family live in one room and my 5,000 lek pension has to support all of us because the younger people are unemployed.'*

Older woman participant at consultation meeting in Katund I Ri village, January 2005.

Civil society's response to older people's situation is limited because the majority of NGOs operate in Tirana and government and donor support are often inadequate to enable NGOs to work in rural areas. There are formal mechanisms for co-operation between government and civil society, but hitherto, NGOs are themselves relatively uncoordinated in their activities.

At a national level, The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Parliamentary Commission are primarily responsible for older people and in theory older people can participate in decision-making at local and national levels. In most districts the level of services provided with older people in mind, is minimal, although older people living in Tirana and Vlora now have access to free transport, social events and day centres. Older people participating in this project felt that the profile of older people as a focus of government priorities is still low, but increasing, and that there had been significant progress in developing partnership with government at local and national levels, to work on older people's issues.

### **The Oldest Woman in Albania**

Halime Fejzullahu was born on 12 October 1885 in a small village near Fieri, in Southern Albania. She was married twice and had two sons from her second marriage. The older son is 83 and the younger, 78. Halime had 130 grandsons and granddaughters across five generations. The youngest was born in July 2003.

Halime was a teenager when Albania was under Ottoman rule and remembered all the wars that took place during her lifetime. She said she did not understand democracy; for her the most important things in society were to shield everyone from harm.

Halime liked to drink raki every day. She still had a keen interest in what is going on in the country and despite the deterioration of her hearing, she talked and sang as she had in the past.

Halime continued to keep in contact with all her family, and was respected by younger relatives. Her family members said that they never considered her a burden, not least because she was very independent. They said, 'She fully deserves the respect we treat her with - she is a great grandmother'.

Halima died from natural causes in September 2004. She was 122 years old.



## Bosnia and Herzegovina

Older people participating in the project from Bosnia and Herzegovina highlighted the need to address the poverty faced by many older people, who receive pensions late and insufficient to cover basic needs. In some cases, older people report that they are unable to receive benefits because they worked in other parts of the former Yugoslavia. They also highlighted poor treatment and lack of respect towards older people by the younger generation. Older volunteers working with the project partner, Osmijeh were particularly vocal in their support for older people organising themselves to lobby to improve their own situation and access to appropriate services.

One of Osmijeh's hardest working volunteers is Mrs Katica Ivanišević. Katica worked for more than 55 years as a nurse and knows a lot about the needs of the sick and of older people. Katica feels that the best reward for any volunteer is the satisfaction of the older person when they receive a visit.

She is a volunteer with many years of experience. When Katica and her 'team' of volunteers, the students of medicine whom she trains, visit the house of an older person they visit with a SMILE on their faces. They listen to the beneficiary, they try to learn about his or her needs and what problems he or she has. They ask how the beneficiary feels; they talk to them and build their trust. They also know that hygiene and professionalism are very important. They wash the patients, comb their hair, and give them manicures.

Unfortunately, many disabled people have not got out of bed for years. Katica and her team help them too. They massage them; help them with gentle exercise, and measure blood pressure, sugar levels and their temperature.

'Older people's needs are enormous and the possibilities for meeting them are small', according to Katica. The advice Katica and her volunteers repeat constantly is 'Feed yourself properly!'. They know how important proper nutrition is for ill people and they know a lot about proper nutrition. The volunteers are always ready to advise those they visit on what to eat to improve their health. 'Thanks to OSMIJEH older people in our community are not alone', says Katica.

Many donors have withdrawn from Bosnia and Herzegovina, as they have other countries in the region. NGOs have developed survival strategies, but some have adjusted or changed priorities based on donor interest and few organisations now work with older people. In part due to the governing structure of the country, there is limited cooperation between NGOs and between NGOs and government organisations.

Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of two parts: The Federation, which is decentralised and consists of 10 cantons and The Republika Srpska, which is relatively centralised. According to Federation-level ministries, they act mainly as advisors to the 10 cantons. Cantons develop their own laws, but have varying capacities to make and implement these laws. This means that the situation of older people varies considerably from canton to canton and it is a major challenge for organisations trying to lobby together to effect national level change. Older people reported that no institutions deal specifically with older people's issues, that the state does not recognise their needs and would probably prefer 'not to see' their problems.

## Croatia

Older people consulted by the project in Croatia highlighted the difficulties they face in meeting the costs of their basic needs, in accessing adequate service provision, particularly in healthcare and problems of isolation and loneliness in communities that are often unreceptive to older people's needs.

In Croatia, there are few remaining international donors for work with older people, but national and local government are starting to make small amounts of funding available. At present, the funding situation is difficult for NGOs working with older people. NGOs and relevant Ministries, including local governments, discuss older people's issues but most agree that information sharing and co-operation between NGOs needs to improve.

Vaso Lunić (76) lived with his wife Jelena (75) and her disabled brother, Branko (80) in Luka company barracks, where Vaso worked for 30 years. When the offices were refurbished, they let Vaso use the barracks as provisional accommodation with the promise of a permanent flat. The family have lived in poor conditions in provisional accommodation for 20 years; the roof leaks and there is widespread damp. They cannot afford repairs because Vaso's and Branko's pensions hardly cover living expenses and Luka's director refused to see Vaso to discuss possible help.

'The doctors operated on my eyes several times and I received treatment at the clinic for over a year but it did no good. That is why I could only work in transport and retired due to disability. One day my wife Jelena, could not hold a spoon in her hand and she was diagnosed with a brain tumour. She had an operation in Zagreb.

Branko, my brother-in-law, had a heart attack after his wife's death and has been disabled since. He came to live with us during the war. Everything he had was burnt so he had nowhere to go. Health insurance covers the costs of medical treatment and medicines. Life would be much easier if Branko could live in an older people's home. We are no longer young and hardly manage to care for ourselves. It is hard for us to take care of someone on crutches.

When my wife went into hospital I felt cut down like a tree. I had never cooked before. I worked and my wife took care of the children and our home. Then I had to look after myself and Branko; I couldn't fry an egg. I went to a pensioner's home to ask for help and a social worker told me that [Association MI] ran a subsidised meals on wheels service. That saved me. You know what it means to have at least one cooked meal a day. It is easy to eat a slice of bread and a cup of coffee for breakfast and supper. When my wife came out of hospital I continued on one meal a day. My wife cannot stand for long any more; she cannot prepare meals. And the food is good'.

Mr. Vaso Lunić died at the end of 2004; he still hadn't been granted a permanent place to live.

The relatively new Ministry of Family, Defenders and Intergenerational Solidarity is currently developing a national plan for care of older people at the time of writing. The Ministry is exploring how to involve NGOs in its activities and together with the Ministry of Health and Social Care, supports the development of day centres and institutional care.

Older people do not currently participate in decision-making, and feel that there is limited understanding of their needs. Although there are three older people's representatives in the current parliament, they have limited powers to influence the situation of older people as a whole.

Croatia is now a candidate for EU accession; however, many Croatians fear that the process may be too quick and key social problems, ignored.

## Serbia and Montenegro

Older people in the Republic of Serbia report that they have a very low standard of living, receiving pensions that do not cover basic living costs, and in some cases, receiving no pensions at all. Older people have difficulty accessing appropriate healthcare services and experience widespread isolation as younger relatives focus on trying to find work.

Serbia and Montenegro has one of the largest older populations in the world and according to the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Affairs, the country is expecting a 'geri-boom' in the period 2005-2020. Older people are also an over-represented group living in collective centres as refugees or internally displaced people and often face particular difficulty adjusting to life once they are moved out of the collective centres. According to anecdotal evidence, economic interdependence of extended families is widespread, with older people and younger relatives pooling pensions and wages to cover the costs of the household.

Approximately 20 NGOs currently work with older people as part of their activities and many of these are connected through the 'Humanas' network in which they share experience and information. Despite this, NGOs agree that there is room for improvement in cooperation between them on common activities. The legal framework for NGOs is considered out-of-date since charitable activities are still governed by a law from 1972. Like other countries across the region, Serbia and Montenegro has witnessed the departure of many international organisations and donors over the last few years and NGOs now struggle to raise sufficient funds to cover the cost of their activities.

Some decisions affecting older people are made at Federal level (for Serbia and Montenegro) and some at republic level (for Serbia). For the purposes of this publication, all project activities refer to activities in the Republic of Serbia since this is where both partner organisations, Lastavica and Viktorija are based.

Politicians in Serbia recognise the power of the older vote and older people are organised into pensioners' associations at local and federal levels to try to influence decision-making on older people's issues. Through these associations and NGOs, older people have influenced the Government to re-activate the National Council on Ageing which is taking a leading role in developing a national plan on ageing. The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Affairs, Ministry of Health, and Commission for Refugees all have remits which include responsibility for older people.

In general there is commitment by NGOs and state institutions to work together to improve the quality of services for older people. The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Affairs has established a social innovation fund to encourage the development of services in partnership with NGOs.

Soka Karanović, 94, was born and lived in Lapac village, Croatia. In 1995 she became a refugee and has since lived in the Collective Centre Trinbas, Kragujevac with her son and daughter. Repatriation is impossible since their home was burned to the ground in 1995. Despite all the tolls of her life and the difficulties of life in the collective centre, Soka is cheerful. She wishes she had wool for knitting in order to make sweaters for some of the children from the collective centre. Volunteers from 'Viktorija' visit her and other older people in the collective centre. In this way we try to bring them some happiness and improve their social life.

**PRIORITIES FOR LOCAL ACTIVITIES IDENTIFIED BY OLDER PEOPLE'S NGOS & OTHER STAKEHOLDERS AT FIRST ROUND OF CONSULTATION MEETINGS 2004**

<p><b>ALBANIA</b></p> <p><b>SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Older people contributed throughout their working lives and now have no financial security.</li> <li>- 50% of the actual workforce works in the informal economy and pay no tax to support public services.</li> <li>- In rural areas pensions are lower and older people are unable to benefit from the land.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACCESS TO SERVICES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Older people do not have access to appropriate treatment and medicine.</li> <li>- Older people are susceptible to diseases from pollution.</li> <li>- Many public service professionals migrated from rural areas. Health services are 'non-existent' and older people need to travel 20-30km travel to access services.</li> <li>- The government ignores older people's experience and knowledge in policy development.</li> </ul> <p><b>DISCRIMINATION IN THE COMMUNITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Families are increasingly 'nuclear'; older people are separated from children as a result of migration.</li> <li>- Younger people live off their older relatives' pensions but rarely economically support their older parents.</li> <li>- Increasing numbers of older people live on their own. They suffer depression and even commit suicide.</li> </ul>	<p><b>BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA</b></p> <p><b>SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low income: most older people cannot pay for basic needs and pensions only cover 50% of costs of living.</li> <li>- Some older people do not receive pensions because they worked in different parts of Yugoslavia or do not have necessary documentation.</li> <li>- Benefits are received inconsistently and late.</li> <li>- Older people cannot afford medicines.</li> <li>- Disabled or dependent older people are not eligible for additional benefits despite additional needs.</li> <li>- Former agricultural workers receive very low pensions and face the longest delays.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACCESS TO SERVICES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In one hospital the third floor is for older people, but there is no lift, and older people cannot access it.</li> <li>- Older people said that doctors and nurses ignore them and treat younger generations first.</li> <li>- Older people wait longer than younger people, whom community services serve quickly and take seriously.</li> </ul> <p><b>DISCRIMINATION IN THE COMMUNITY/ FAMILY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some children have sold their parents' homes, and leave them with nothing in their old age.</li> <li>- Many children do not care for their parents but leave them to care for grandchildren.</li> <li>- Older people are isolated from society.</li> </ul>
<p><b>CROATIA</b></p> <p><b>ATTITUDES/ LACK OF AWARENESS OF NEEDS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Older people are lonely and lack opportunities to socialise with each other and different generations.</li> <li>- Older people face prejudice and have few opportunities to work.</li> <li>- Older people are isolated and have problems with communications (villages, islands, urban areas).</li> <li>- Younger relatives cannot care for older people and often put them into institutional care.</li> <li>- Relatives often expect to receive an apartment or money in return for helping older people.</li> </ul> <p><b>LACK OF ACCESS TO SERVICES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inadequate access to transport, especially for older people in villages and on islands.</li> <li>- Older people find it difficult to access appropriate specialists due to long waiting lists.</li> <li>- Older people on low incomes struggle to pay for medicines that are not on 'the list'.</li> <li>- There are insufficient services to allow older people to stay out of institutions.</li> <li>- There are no free opportunities for further education and IT training for older people.</li> </ul> <p><b>LIVING STANDARDS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Older people feel that doctors treat them inadequately because they are old.</li> <li>- Older people cannot access opportunities to supplement their income despite their experience and skills.</li> <li>- Older people are expected to care for unemployed relatives.</li> <li>- Older people are accused of everyday problems, such as causing crowding in buses or queues.</li> <li>- There are long waits to go into state older people's homes and private homes are too expensive.</li> <li>- Because pensions are low, older people say they have to choose between paying for food and utilities.</li> </ul>	<p><b>SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO</b></p> <p><b>NATIONAL LEVEL POLICY AND PRACTICE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Older refugees and displaced people wish to return home and are not enabled to do so (IDPs/refugees cannot access services if they return home).</li> <li>- Pensions are too low to cover basic living costs.</li> <li>- Agricultural workers receive very low pensions and payments are delayed by 17 months (at time of writing).</li> <li>- Some people have no access to pensions at all.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACCESS TO SERVICES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Health care and medicines are too expensive (the list of free medicines is getting shorter; if people pay for medicine, they cannot afford food).</li> <li>- Some older people feel that they are treated badly by nurses and care assistants.</li> <li>- There are insufficient home and social care services.</li> <li>- Older people experience long delays to see specialists.</li> <li>- Dentistry is not affordable.</li> <li>- Older people feel that they face longer waits in doctors' surgeries than younger people.</li> <li>- Some older people report that nutrition in older people's homes is inappropriate.</li> <li>- Pharmacies and medicines are sometimes inaccessible; older people are required to pick up medicines in person.</li> </ul> <p><b>DISCRIMINATION IN THE COMMUNITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Older people are refused seats on buses.</li> <li>- Younger people often say that older people are in the way; older people are not respected or valued.</li> <li>- Older people report that their homes were taken from them by younger relatives, leaving them with nothing.</li> <li>- Younger people make financial demands and often take or expect older people's pensions; but offer older people no assistance.</li> <li>- Older people are isolated and lonely in communities.</li> </ul>

## PRIORITY CONCERNS IDENTIFIED BY OLDER PEOPLE AT 1ST ROUND CONSULTATION MEETINGS 2004

<p><b>ALBANIA</b></p> <p><b>SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Awareness-raising in the community through conference and media campaign.</li> <li>- Run a survey to assess conditions in the South, North and Central areas.</li> <li>- Improve pensions legislation by organising a meeting with all stakeholders including the Ministry.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACCESS TO SERVICES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Guidelines for primary health practitioners on diagnosis and treatment of older people.</li> <li>- Deliver additional training for doctors.</li> <li>- Offer homecare at low cost in a community with problems.</li> </ul> <p><b>DISCRIMINATION IN THE COMMUNITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish network of NGOs and government, sign an MOU; reduce overlap through joint meetings.</li> <li>- Survey of conditions of older people.</li> <li>- Activities integrating excluded older people into communities/ increasing older people's self-esteem including weekly low-cost meetings of older people with singing, reading, lunch, picnics.</li> <li>- Increase community awareness, start with questionnaire on views towards older people.</li> </ul>	<p><b>BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA</b></p> <p><b>SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Media campaign to increase older people's incomes (through taxes on high incomes).</li> <li>- Provide incomes to carers of older people.</li> <li>- Lobby for equal benefits for all older people in Bosnia (independent of which canton they live in).</li> <li>- Lobby for free medical treatment and medicines.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACCESS TO SERVICES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lobby local-level service providers (hospitals, courts, government institutions) to prioritise older people in provision of services.</li> <li>- Establish older people's centres throughout the country, cooperating with local social work centres and voluntary counselling professionals.</li> </ul> <p><b>DISCRIMINATION IN THE COMMUNITY/ FAMILY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Through letters to government and media, to raise awareness of older people's issues.</li> <li>- Promote voluntary work with older people in schools and villages.</li> <li>- Develop database of organisations working with older people; work together to achieve joint-aims for older people.</li> <li>- Develop more older people's self-help groups.</li> <li>- Educate younger people to respect older people.</li> <li>- Improve financial situation of younger people.</li> <li>- Lobby for laws against abuse within families.</li> </ul>
<p><b>CROATIA</b></p> <p><b>ATTITUDES/ LACK OF AWARENESS OF NEEDS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote volunteering in the media.</li> <li>- Encourage older people to use their skills and former professions.</li> <li>- Educate children about needs of older people. Link generations by promoting the fact that older people care for young children.</li> <li>- Organise school trips for children to learn about traditions from older people.</li> <li>- Encourage co-operation between older people and Ministry of Family, Defenders and Intergenerational Solidarity to decrease isolation of older people.</li> </ul> <p><b>LACK OF ACCESS TO SERVICES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure transport is available once per week, so older people can access services in town centres.</li> <li>- Support all uninsured older people (including refugees) to approach The Centre for Welfare for legal issues and access to appropriate health services.</li> <li>- Provide primary care at home for older people who are not able to go to big towns for all medical care.</li> <li>- Open new day centres.</li> <li>- Raise awareness in the community of the housing needs of older people who are sick or alone.</li> </ul> <p><b>LIVING STANDARDS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lobby for pension increase to cover all basic needs.</li> <li>- Lobby businesses to provide food from their kitchens for older people who live alone and disabled.</li> <li>- Lobby national government for fairer distribution of local government resources so that communities can allocate more resources for older people.</li> </ul>	<p><b>SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO</b></p> <p><b>NATIONAL LEVEL POLICY AND PRACTICE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lobby for institutional support of volunteer work.</li> <li>- Lobby for tax reductions to fund volunteer activities.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACCESS TO SERVICES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop memorandum for municipal level collaboration.</li> <li>- Provide service to collect medical prescriptions, instead of requiring older people to collect in person.</li> <li>- Encourage trainee doctors to work in spas for older people.</li> <li>- Lobby municipalities to buy vehicles to transport older people to hospital.</li> </ul> <p><b>DISCRIMINATION IN THE COMMUNITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Campaign in local communities to change attitudes towards older people through leaflets and meetings.</li> <li>- Organise self-help clubs.</li> <li>- Lobby local institutions to improve existing services.</li> <li>- Educate children to develop positive attitudes to older people in schools.</li> <li>- Promote volunteer work with older people.</li> <li>- Train older people about their rights through meetings.</li> <li>- Document cases of elder abuse and develop evidence base to influence institutions.</li> <li>- Work with older people to develop their own TV/radio shows at local level.</li> <li>- Develop family-level training for all generations to understand each other.</li> </ul>

## Partner organisations

The following organisations partnered HelpAge International on this project using their considerable experience in working with older people and disadvantaged individuals and groups. These organisations were the pivot between older people and other organisations, including HAI and received capacity building and training to equip them for this role. This section briefly outlines the activities of the project partners and their experience in working with older people prior to this project. All partner organisations are members of the nine-country South East European Network (SEEN) of NGOs which aims to empower disadvantaged older people to combat discrimination in South East Europe. The network is coordinated by HAI.

### Albania

The **Albanian Association of Geriatrics and Gerontology (AAGG)** was established in 1991 with the following objectives to:

- Support older people, increasing their profile and promoting their contribution to society
- Advocate for the improvement of legislation and practise concerning older people
- Support the process of improving social and health services for older people.

Since 1994, AAGG has been a full member of the European (EAG) and International Associations of Gerontology (IAG). AAGG participates in international activities organised by those two associations and has 60 active members from different professional backgrounds, mostly in the field of healthcare. There are six branches of AAGG in cities throughout Albania including Shkodra, Vlora, Kruja, Durresi and Elbasani.

AAGG has worked consistently to improve information about Third Age issues in Albania through the organisation of six scientific conferences for experts in ageing. AAGG works with and has good links with other associations with common interests and activities such as organisations of pensioners, patients, demographers and public health practitioners. AAGG also has excellent links with the media and state representatives.

Through the support received and activities developed on this project, AAGG has been able to influence public policies in support of older people, including social initiatives in Tirana city, and the creation of a national committee for older people.

AAGG's experience in supporting older people has enabled it to begin to address the gaps in social and health services for older people that have emerged since the fall of communism. In 1998-99 and 2001-02, AAGG organised large screening programmes to identify older people's health and social problems and to raise awareness of these amongst policy makers. These activities and the lack of formal training in geriatrics and gerontology have highlighted the importance of training service providers as a priority for the future activities of AAGG. A series of seminars for family doctors has already been planned for the end of 2005.

AAGG is developing activities to support voluntarism and self-help groups for the older people of Tirana region. This process has facilitated stronger collaboration with other older people's associations.

### Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Osmijeh** 'Smile', Association for Psychosocial Help and Development of Voluntary Work, was founded in 1996. Osmijeh is based in Gračanica, Tuzla Canton, Bosnia and Herzegovina. It addresses the needs of citizens of all ages through a range of social rehabilitation activities including an older people's empowerment programme for rights protection, counselling centre and a far-reaching network of self-help groups for older people.

Osmijeh promotes and develops volunteering for all generations, from children and youth up to older people's volunteering. The organisation has implemented projects to empower older people, and to facilitate voluntary work by older people since 2000. At present Osmijeh implements these projects in Gračanica and Zavidovići regions. The older person's programme, which also receives (separate) EU funding, includes over 1,000 older volunteers.

Volunteer counsellors are involved in the following activities:

- Home visiting in their communities, including help with housework, shopping, cooking, providing company and moral support
- Liaising with local government and social work centres on specific health issues and to access further support
- Defending older people's rights: Self-help groups go to their local authorities to lobby for consideration of older people's needs; they also try to develop supportive relationships with older people who are in local government offices
- Distribution of humanitarian packages with The Red Cross and Caritas: Self-help groups provide lists of people to receive packages, others are involved in distribution
- Joint work with local school children to clean up the environment
- Building shelters at bus stations so that people have a warmer, dryer place to wait for the bus
- Helping each other to grow food crops in their gardens
- Regular self-help group meetings to discuss issues and raise each other's morale.

Because of the diversity of programmes that Osmijeh works with, many intergenerational activities take place in the communities where Osmijeh volunteers are active. Intergenerational programmes enrich both younger and older generations. These activities have a powerful sensitising effect on younger generations and the general public, raising their awareness of the situation, needs and rights of older people.

Osmijeh co-operated with HAI on the production of a handbook for organisations working with older people in Bosnia and Herzegovina and contributed to HAI's presentation to the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UN ECE) Inter-ministerial Conference on Ageing held in Berlin in September 2002.

## Croatia

**Udruga MI** (Association WE) is a non-governmental organisation, based in Split, Croatia, founded in 1996. 'We' stands for a sense of community and involvement. Their vision is to make a contribution towards a community where each person has an opportunity to grow personally and cares for other people. Udruga MI strives to improve the quality of life in the community and promote values of charity and philanthropy.

Among other activities, Udruga MI has programmes and projects for older people, with the goal to meet the needs of the older population in Split and surrounding areas. Their activities are: counselling, organising various clubs, carrying out educational activities, supporting elderly volunteers, providing home care services and help to vulnerable older people (delivery of meals, etc.)

Udruga MI also runs an information centre for refugees, a subsidised meals programme and a volunteer centre. Funding sources include international donors and local and national government. It assists other non-government organisations developing programmes for older people, and aims to offer a positive model of how the voluntary sector can communicate and work co-operatively with both government bodies and the general public.

Originally set up to support refugees, especially older age groups, Association MI developed wider programmes for older people in general. It has a national reputation for its work to engage older people and skilled professionals, such as psychologists and social workers, in planning and running community projects.

Association MI's largest programme to date is, 'Wisdom of Split - Elderly Community Support', launched in 1998, which brings together several linked activities to improve older citizens' psychological, educational and social welfare, including counselling, social clubs, educational and recreational activities. The scheme involves 1,600 volunteer workers and beneficiaries, and is actively supported by the Split Municipality, national government and local NGOs. The programme also lobbies for human and responsible relations towards the elderly and for more dignified ageing. During the past seven years the programme for older people has developed and expanded with new activities in accordance with the expressed needs of its beneficiaries and community members and with financial support from local and national government and other donor sources.

## Serbia and Montenegro

**Viktorija** is a non-governmental organisation, based in Kragujevac, Serbia and Montenegro, and was registered in 1999. With the sudden decline of living conditions in the local community following the war in the former Yugoslavia, an informal group of citizens gathered and developed the beginnings of a self-help network. Its objective was to provide psychological and material support, particularly to children and youth, older people and the disabled.

Viktorija's mission is to bring about social, educational and economic development of the local community and to-date the organisation has implemented over 100 projects of various sizes with approximately 30,000 beneficiaries.

Between 1995 and the beginning of 2005, Viktorija worked in partnership with Oxfam UK to implement both psychosocial, training and economic development programmes to improve the situation of individuals and families.

NGO 'Viktorija' is part of a multi-lateral project to improve the quality of life of older people through the development of self-help groups. At present Viktorija's main projects deal with poverty reduction in the local community. Viktorija's education team of four trainers deliver workshops on communication skills, strategic planning, writing project proposals and fundraising and train unemployed people to enable them to seek employment.

**Lastavica** or 'Swallow' was founded in 1996 as a joint project of the Autonomous Women's Centre of Belgrade and Oxfam UK. Since November 2000, Lastavica has worked as an independent, non-governmental, non-profit making organisation to empower marginalised and vulnerable groups of the population including refugees, internally displaced persons, children, older people and the unemployed through in-kind grants, vocational training, psychosocial support and information sharing.

Lastavica's Community Centre offers various services to over 500 beneficiaries every year - refugees, internally displaced persons, older people and other marginalised groups. These services include education programmes, psychological support, economic empowerment and a club for older people.

Lastavica's work with older people started with the 'Overall support to the elderly in Serbia' project in 2000 supported by IOCC, and in partnership with twenty organisations throughout Serbia. During this period Lastavica set up services for older people that continue to the present day. These services were extended by introducing mobile team visits in 2002, with financial support from the international NGO 'Concern'. Lastavica set up a Club for Older People in 2004, a project which enabled the organisation to improve communication and cooperation with local and national authorities.

Since 2004 Lastavica became a founder member in the national network 'Humanas' - a network of organisations engaged in work with older people.

At present Lastavica works with 120 older people through the club for older people in Surčin, in partnership with the local association of pensioners, the local centre for social policy and 'Vuk Karadžić' primary school, and is supported by the Municipal Coordination Committee for Social Policy from Zemun. The main services that Lastavica offers in the club for older people include:

▫ **Psychosocial activities:**

Psychosocial support, individual and group meetings, counselling sessions with a social worker, legal advice, recreational activities, picnics, theatre visits, meetings to learn about local traditions, newspaper distribution, visits to the pensioners' association, cinema club, programmes and presentations from the self-help groups

▫ **Health activities:** Counselling sessions with the health workers, talks on health issues

▫ **Self-help groups:** Art groups (literature and singing groups), health (measuring of sugar level and blood pressure)

▫ **Economic empowerment:** Textile workshops and food production

▫ **Programme of intergenerational solidarity,** in cooperation with the local 'Vuk Karadžić' primary school.



## Project tools for tackling discrimination against older people

During the development of the project, HelpAge International (HAI) and its five partners in the region devised a toolbox of different activities designed to help older people and their organisations in each country to improve the quality of life for older people in the region. These 'tools' supported the strengthening of civil society by enabling older people's organisations to develop their capacity through training, sharing information and experience. Local activities enabled older people to test ideas that promoted their rights as citizens, by collecting evidence to raise awareness of their situation and needs in each of the project countries, and to develop effective partnerships with key stakeholders to achieve changes in attitudes and behaviours. Evidence collected at a local level, enabled older people and their organisations to scale these local activities up to bring about change in national level policy and practice.

Regional level information sharing with older people's organisations and older people themselves through regional meetings, exchange visits and newsletters provided a bank of ideas for adaptation of local activities and other project tools for the local and national environment. The regional scope of the project also added credibility to the project activities of older people and their NGOs in their local communities and at national level.

The tools were based on initial consultations and the previous experience of HAI and its partners, relating to the viability and effectiveness of activities in each country context.

This section describes each of the following project tools:

- Consultation meetings with older people
- Consultation meetings with NGOs and development of national networks
- National plans of action
- Regional meetings
- Exchange visits
- Newsletters
- Local activities

Under each project tool, this section provides descriptions about the process and some of the adaptations that were necessary to use these within different country or societal contexts. This section should be read in conjunction with section 'Project evaluation and learning', which reflects an analysis of learning in using project tools completed by older people and their organisations at a three-day regional evaluation meeting in Split in May 2005.

### Consultation meetings with older people

In HAI's global experience, when older people are active in their own development, practices and processes to support them are more likely to be sustainable. HAI has helped to develop participatory programming techniques to involve older people in all aspects of project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

In the case of this project, using techniques such as open questions and mapping, partner organisations facilitated older people to contribute to the prioritisation of their concerns and therefore the planning of the activities of national networks.

A regional meeting before the project started gave partner organisations the opportunity to consider how to facilitate meetings effectively with older people. Consultation meetings then took place in each country to:

- Familiarise a key group of older people with the project
- Determine older people's needs and priorities from older people themselves and so ensure older people's views were included in the process of developing national plans of action for each country
- Gain older people's support and involvement in meeting project objectives.

Older people worked in groups to list and prioritise the main problems facing older people in their country. In all four countries, older people spoke up about the exclusion and discrimination they face, and suggested ideas for activities that might both address these problems and support them to enhance their contribution to their families and communities. These discussions fed into the national plans of action, developed with NGOs and older participants the following day. (A grid detailing the priorities identified by older people at the first round of consultation meetings is found on page 13; a list of consultation meetings with older people informing this grid is available in Annex 1).

In the original project proposal it was planned that 'feedback' meetings with older people would take place after national network meetings attended by NGOs and a few older representatives. Project partners recognised that to ensure that older people's perspectives informed local activities, and that the overall direction of the project continued to be relevant to them, older people should be consulted at the outset and represent their discussions themselves, to representatives of NGOs and state institutions the following day.

At the second round of consultation meetings with older people following a period of 9-12 months, participants were asked to:

- Review progress against the national plans of action with particular reference to self-help local activities
- Share learning on advocacy and media from the second regional meeting with a group of older people
- Identify ideas for advocacy/media local activities within the national plans of action framework.

HAI and partner organisations facilitated participatory evaluations with older participants supporting them to identify challenges faced in their self-help local activities to-date that would become the focus of advocacy local activities. (See boxes for examples of the introduction to advocacy received and the process of developing these advocacy local activities in action in Albania).

Having identified obstacles in implementing self-help local activities to-date, groups of older people in the second round of meetings were encouraged to consider how advocacy and media local activities, targeting public opinion, local and/or national government, could be used to address these.

Representatives of partner organisations, local trainers or HAI gave introductions to advocacy based on the training given at the previous regional meeting. This was used to help older people define the focus of potential advocacy local activities linked to the findings of self-help local activities and addressing barriers or discrimination older people face.



Older people taking part in games on excursion Lastavica, Serbia and Montenegro

### Consultation meeting with older people in Albania

At the consultation meeting with older people in Albania participants worked in small groups to review the implementation of the national plan in relation to four main fields of activity:

1. Home visits
2. Assistance for services
3. Education
4. Social events

Each group answered the following questions:

- What has been done so far to implement the national plan?
- What have been the obstacles to successful implementation?
- What needs to be done to complete the micro-activities?

The following answers refer to group 1. Home visits:

What has been done?

- Mapping of older people in need by volunteers (addresses and telephone numbers have been recorded)

What have been the obstacles?

- Older people are under-valued by society. This is the biggest problem (e.g. a doctor is forced to retire at 60 and is replaced by a younger doctor).
- Older people feel isolated, abandoned and excluded from social activities. They are not stimulated.
- Lack of coordination between volunteers and health workers.
- Lack of equipment and transport for home visits.

What will be done to complete the micro-activities?

- To complete the process of identifying older people (it was noticed during the mapping that showing an interest in older people is a way of developing emotional support for them).
- Creation of a database of older people with detailed information.

Based on feedback from all three groups, in the plenary participants identified **advocacy activities** that should take place at three different levels:

1. Commission level - get older people involved at both national and municipal level.
2. Self-help group levels - establish network of older people's groups; give information to older people.
3. Media level - publish achievements of the project in the media, challenges that are faced; provide a report from this workshop; provide reports on the situation of older people as project outputs.

These ideas were then developed with NGOs working with older people, older people's representatives and other stakeholders from government and media at the consultation meetings with NGOs and through the development of national networks with shared objectives to tackle the priorities of older people.

The format of these meetings varied from one country to the next, and, whereas in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, by year two of the project older people from throughout the country were represented, in Serbia and Montenegro and in Albania, these meetings attracted participants who lived locally to the partner organisations.

In all four countries, the partners organised additional meetings with older people to ensure that activities remained linked to priorities that older people expressly identified and to collect additional qualitative monitoring information from local activities.

Albanian partner, AAGG and HAI facilitated a discussion with 22 older villagers of Katund I Ri on the day after the consultation with older people because bad weather prevented village representatives from attending. Older villagers contributed ideas on how to ensure the interests of older people in rural communities were represented in advocacy activities. Older villagers considered the following important:

- *'Getting organised was a tradition under the old system but now nobody cares so they don't support us.'*
- *'We have no contact with the Tirana municipality but we are unhappy about how the commune treats us. They don't listen to us and are rude to us. We don't even know what they are supposed to do- they only help themselves.'*
- *'With support we can form a small association and bring problems to the commune as a group. We can contact the TV.'*

### **Presentation on Advocacy at the 2nd Consultation Meeting with Older People in Tirana, Albania, January 2005**

The goal of advocacy is to promote change in policies, attitudes and actions. Advocacy is about raising awareness to sensitise organisations and people to the needs of older people leading to change.

NGOs often intervene after problems have manifested themselves; this is an important way of meeting immediate needs. Another effective strategy is for an organisation to intervene earlier at the level of policy and practice that is causing the problem. Interventions at this earlier stage can change systems, structures and behaviours in a permanent way so that the impact of the NGOs efforts is longer-term and sustainable.

1. A NEED of older people is access to health care
2. The POLICY and PRACTICE is that health programmes do not target older people (staff are not trained in older people's health needs)
3. The EFFECT of this is that the health of older people suffers
4. The IMPACT is that older people are less able to care for themselves
5. The RESULT is that the quality of life of older people deteriorates.

NGOs often target their resources at points 4. and 5., by providing welfare support. Long-term change can be achieved by targeting resources at point 2. This is called **ADVOCACY**.

When developing advocacy activities the following are all important:

1. A clear **GOAL** for your advocacy activities - what are you hoping to achieve?

Goals of advocacy might include:

- Changing a specific policy
  - Increasing awareness and understanding of ageing amongst service providers and the general population, which can lead to a reduction in misunderstanding
  - Disseminating positive information and images about older people to raise awareness of their contributions and to challenge stereotypes
  - Establishing strong older people's organisations to develop a strong voice for older people's issues.
2. A clear **MESSAGE** - be clear about what you are wanting to say
  3. **METHODS** - develop a strategy with good objectives
  4. **STAKEHOLDERS** - identify which people you are trying to influence. Targets might be:
    - The general public - through media campaigns, leaflets and posters, events celebrating older people
    - Older people themselves - by establishing self-help groups
    - NGOs and service providers - for example, targeting a woman's group that does not involve older women
    - Policy makers - they can be given general information, but also targeted with specific projects and ideas. When problems are presented to policy makers it is good to also present ideas for solutions, including what older people can contribute themselves.

Section 'Project evaluation and learning' includes an evaluation of the effectiveness of consultation meetings with older people, and Section 'Recommendations' makes recommendations on how to ensure the impact of these meetings is optimised to improve older people's own input in activities to improve the quality of life for older people in the region.

## **Consultation meetings with NGOs and development of national networks**

Partner organisations working with older people in all project countries reported a decline over recent years in the number of NGOs working with older people, linked to the reduction in funding opportunities available to the region's NGOs. Despite this, there are still numerous community-level organisations, not-for-profit service providers (including centres for social work) and pensioners' associations who devote a substantial part or all of their activities to work with older people. In HAI's experience, if these organisations work together, not only do they reduce duplication of activities where limited funding is available, but they are better-equipped to influence public opinion and government decision-making, including resource allocation, than if NGOs go it alone. Within this CARDS funded project, the partners aimed to develop sustainable networks of organisations working with older people, which can continue to raise awareness of older people's interests and share good practice in working with older people, beyond the lifespan of the project.

The objectives of the first round of national meetings in each project country in year one of the project were to:

- Familiarise NGOs and stakeholders in each country with the project
- Gain the support of other NGOs and stakeholders in meeting project objectives
- Plan local activities, according to project objectives and priorities identified by older people
- Develop networking processes between NGOs and stakeholders working with older people.

To ensure that older people's perspectives remained central to stakeholder consultation meetings, HAI and the partners organised for these meetings to take place the day after the consultation meeting with older people, and to be attended by four to eight older people's representatives, elected by older people on the previous day.

In addition to older people's representatives, stakeholder meetings invited participants from local and international NGOs, and local and national government. Meetings varied considerably in format and attendance from one country to the next.

In Albania, the historical roots of partner AAGG meant that links with national government were already strong. According to Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare representatives attending the meeting, ageing was already considered a 'hot issue' due to the demographic changes taking place in the country. Networking processes and resulting local activities enabled AAGG to develop stronger links with the Municipality of Tirana and older people's CBOs including the 50,000 strong Union of Pensioners. The latter organisation became very significant in shifting the AAGG towards a more participatory approach to working with older people, and involving more women in project activities.

Bosnian partners, Osmijeh found that at the first round of national network meetings, initial interest from canton, social work and NGO representatives from the Republika Srpska was disappointing and several social work centres did not respond. However, links with government in the Gračanica region were strengthened further, and, at the second round of national network meetings an NGO from Republika Srpska did attend the network meeting.

The first Croatian meeting was attended by NGOs from all around the country, representatives from the Intergenerational Solidarity Department of the Ministry for Family, Defenders and Intergenerational Solidarity, and by a representative from the Municipality of Split Health and Social Care Centre.

In Serbia and Montenegro the development of the Elderly Advocacy Network preceded the start of the project and 11 other NGOs including project partners Lastavica and Viktorija had signed a memorandum to commit the organisations to develop joint activities in programming and advocacy with older people. These NGOs felt that the CARDS project complemented the existing network and built its capacity to address a broader advocacy agenda to address age discrimination. The network had already started work with the government both on developing a National Plan of Action of Ageing and including older people in the Poverty Reduction Strategy for Serbia and Montenegro.

### Network of NGOs working with older people established in Serbia and Montenegro

Some organisations working with the older population met in early 2004, at the initiative of the Red Cross of Serbia and Montenegro. The number of organisations gradually increased from one meeting to the next. The aim of these meetings was to exchange information on activities and problems encountered in work with older people. After a couple of meetings, it was decided to create a network bound by a memorandum, with the aim to formalise and enhance joint cooperation and coordination between organisations working with older people in Serbia and Montenegro.

The aims of the network are to:

- Facilitate cooperation and coordination between the signatories and efficient exchange of information in relation to ongoing activities, experience and plans
- Ensure a co-ordinated approach towards state, local authorities and media in programme direction and operational plans
- Organise joint activities of mutual interest for the signatories, such as celebration of the International Day of Older People, National Days of Solidarity towards Older People, etc.
- Prepare and publish joint publications
- Develop a comprehensive programme for training volunteers in work with older people
- Launch joint appeals for funds to develop joint activities.

Signatories agreed the first joint action was to adopt a NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON INSTITUTIONAL CARE, SOCIAL SECURITY AND IMPROVED LIVING CONDITIONS OF OLDER PEOPLE, in line with recommendations of the United Nation's World Assemblies on Ageing. The signatories resolved that a consultative and coordination body should be responsible for ensuring the modernisation of policies to improve the quality of life of older people, development of effective partnership between the state, local authorities, relevant older people's organisations, and other relevant humanitarian and institutional organisations, and to prepare, publicise and pass laws relevant to social security and improvement of living conditions of older people.

At the second round of consultation meetings with NGOs discussions were held on developing, or, in the case of Serbia and Montenegro, strengthening the national network. In Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina this involved gaining consensus on the key functions of the network and identifying actions such as enhancing exchange of information, increasing awareness amongst civil society groups and key government officials of international agreements which the government had committed itself like the UN Economic Commission for Europe Regional Implementation Strategy of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, and advocating for government to develop a national plan of action on ageing. In Albania joint actions focused on ways the national network can partner with the government's National Commission on Ageing, mandated to develop a national plan of action, while in Serbia and Montenegro the second round of consultation meetings was an opportunity for the network members to explore advocacy opportunities related to the international policy frameworks the government is a signatory to, which are described below.

After feedback at the second regional meeting held in Tirana, partners agreed to provide advocacy training as part of the second round of consultations with NGOs. A training session on advocacy was held at the consultation meetings in Albania and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while in Croatia the training focused on working with the media. Representatives from the previous day's consultations with older people presented their plans for advocacy local activities which were further developed through feedback from NGO network members, including the role their organisations could plan in supporting these activities.

To enable future sharing of good practice in common areas of work and greater sustainability of the network, at each meeting, representatives of each organisation present were asked to exchange information on:

- Current activities of the organisation
- Their plans for work with older people
- The challenges they face in their work with older people.

The following observations were common to NGOs in all four countries:

- The majority of organisations lack adequate funds for their activities
- A lack of interest in society for older people makes work in this area particularly challenging
- There is less experience in work with older people in comparison to work with other vulnerable groups
- There are problems related to achieving effective collaboration and coordination
- There are few publications and resources providing best practice examples in this field
- The attitudes of some officials towards older people can obstruct activities
- There is a need for specific advocacy activities with under-represented ethnic groups
- There is a lack of comprehensive information about older people living alone at a national level.

In three out of four countries, meeting participants also considered how international policy frameworks could be used to ensure national governments met their commitments to older people. These include:

#### ▫ **EU Accession Stabilisation and Association process (SAP)**

All four CARDS countries are at various stages of the Stabilisation and Association process which paves the way for EU membership. The countries have to gear their political, economic and institutional development to the values and models underpinning the EU: democracy, respect for human rights and a market economy. The EU does support and assist them in introducing the necessary reforms to progress in these areas. Even though social policy has not been deemed a priority reform issue, this is not the case for human rights and the protection of minorities. This offers an opportunity for civil society to advocate that action aimed at eliminating age discrimination is included as a priority human rights issue within the SAP. Moreover, civil society should advocate that the EU and national governments now prioritise social policy issues aimed at improving the wellbeing of vulnerable groups such as the elderly as part of the SAP.

#### ▫ **Council of Europe**

Albania and Croatia have ratified the European Social Charter (ESC) as members of the Council of Europe (CoE), while Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro recently signed the ESC in 2004/2005 respectively. Article 23 specifies, 'The right of elderly persons to social protection' and civil society should partner with government in ensuring that this international and legally binding commitment is fulfilled. Another policy influencing opportunity is advocating that CoE Recommendations are incorporated into government policy, such as Recommendation 136 (2003) on the consequences of demographic change for Europe's regions which recommends that member governments keep the issue of ageing population high on the agenda in order to develop a policy based on demographic developments.

#### ▫ **Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP)**

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro have developed 'Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers' which describe the country's macroeconomic, structural and social policies and programmes to promote broad-based growth and reduce poverty. This process is supported by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Civil society has been fairly successful in ensuring that strategies to alleviate poverty amongst older people have been incorporated in the PRSPs. The challenge now is to ensure that governments and donor agencies prioritise these strategies and that older people are actively involved in the PRSP monitoring process.

#### ▫ **Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and Berlin Declaration (included as Annex 2)**

The governments of all four CARDS countries were represented at the Madrid UN Second World Assembly on Ageing and at the Berlin UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Ministerial Conference on Ageing which were both held in 2002. In adopting the Regional Implementation Strategy of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in the UNECE region, the government representatives committed their governments to implement the strategy. A recommended action at the Berlin Conference was the development of a national plan of action on ageing. To date the governments of Albania, Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro have commenced this process in collaboration with civil society.

## National plans of action

At the outset of the project, consultation meetings with older people and with NGOs working with older people enabled each country to develop a national plan of action within the framework of the project objectives. Because all four countries are represented in a four-year programme to reduce discrimination against older people, national plans acknowledged scope for a complementary second phase of activities, allowing a longer-term approach to realising the rights of older people in South East Europe.

National plans of action were formulated following the regional workshop in Belgrade in July 2004, during which partners developed an understanding of participatory methods of working with older people. These techniques were used to focus national plans on priority issues for older people, to develop appropriate local activities with older people in order to test models addressing national plans objectives and indicators to measure impact on the national plans.

Following consultations with older people, in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) the network focused on project objectives 1 (Older people have increased access to appropriate public services) and 2 (as illustrated below.) Older people in the first round of consultation meetings expressed the belief that the development of the self-help group model - already tested in Gračanica - would enable more older people to meet with others, access psycho-social support and collectively represent their views to communities, local and national government. The activities and indicators reflect outputs and media attention that will result in changed attitudes towards and increased co-operation with older people. The BiH national plan also illustrates how the four-year project, 'Empowering disadvantaged older people to combat discrimination in South East Europe', will build on learning from activities under the CARDS funded programme.

### Bosnia and Herzegovina

Overall Objective/Result	Indicators	Activities
<p><b>2. Older people's contributions and needs are recognised through changed attitudes in communities</b></p> <p>- Promoting older people's active participation in the community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of older people mobilised in the community</li> <li>- Number of older people involved in training self-help groups</li> <li>- Number of older people consulted</li> <li>- Number of disabled and isolated older people contacted</li> <li>- Number of intergenerational projects in the area</li> <li>- Number of media articles and TV programmes showing positive attitudes to older people.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Year 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recruitment and training of mentors and group leaders</li> <li>- Development of new self-help groups</li> <li>- Volunteers working with older people</li> <li>- Older people volunteering</li> <li>- Development of counselling units with older volunteers</li> <li>- Home visiting.</li> </ul> <p><b>Year 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continued self-help group activity</li> <li>- Development of manual of good practice</li> <li>- Volunteering in the community</li> <li>- Media promotion</li> <li>- Intergenerational activities with youth.</li> </ul> <p><b>Year 3 - 4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continued self-help group activity</li> <li>- Volunteering in the community</li> <li>- Media promotion</li> <li>- Continued self-help group activity</li> <li>- Volunteering in the community</li> <li>- Media campaign.</li> </ul>



## Serbia and Montenegro

In Serbia and Montenegro, older people and other stakeholders translated the regional project objective to develop appropriate services into specific 'sub-objectives' for the country context.

Overall Objective/Result	Indicators	Activities
<p><b>1. Older people have increased access to the appropriate public services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Older people are better informed about their rights</li> <li>- Older people are more aware of the discrimination in public service and ask for their rights.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Analysed results from the research</li> <li>- Articles about results of the campaign</li> <li>- Reports from meetings with local/national authorities.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Year 1</b> <b>Year 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organise a participatory research to investigate the type of unsatisfactory public services for older people</li> </ul> <p><b>Year 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Analyse and compile the data from the research</li> <li>- Involve these data in a media campaign</li> </ul> <p><b>Year 4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advocate with the evidence with local/national authorities for better OP access to public services.</li> </ul>

### Regional meetings

Partner organisations and older people themselves highlighted the benefits of representatives from each of the four countries coming together to learn and exchange experience from throughout the region. Regional meetings enabled partners to build capacity to support older people through participatory methods and monitoring, advocacy and self-help local activities, and discuss the working parameters and co-ordination arrangements for this project.

*'I have worked with older people for 30 years, but through this I realise that I have gaps in my knowledge and I thank you for filling them.'*

*'With life experience as we have, we are still learning now.'*

Feedback from older participants at the Tirana Regional Meeting, November 2004.

### **Training in Participatory Methodology and Empowerment**

The first meeting in Belgrade in July 2004 included training in participatory methodology and empowerment through self-help initiatives. Participants were introduced to a variety of HelpAge International's participatory techniques for working with older people that assist organisations to challenge negative perceptions of older people and to put older people's own perceptions of their situation and possible responses to it, at the centre of the organisations' work. Techniques covered include mapping, effective interviewing and listening, institutional analysis, daily calendars and matrix ranking, many of which are outlined in detail in HelpAge International's *Participatory research with older people sourcebook*.

#### **Brief overview of the participatory approach:**

- An approach/philosophy and mixture of methods
- Emphasises analysis by participants not researchers
- Researchers are facilitators
- Multiple perspectives, seeks out diversity
- Analysis on the spot, information not extracted
- Constant cross checking - triangulation
- No blue print, work is iterative (learning is cumulative)
- Visual techniques to promote equality of participation
- Listening and observation are the main skills required
- Demands behaviours: respect, team work, not being domineering, being relaxed, being innovative, taking time, and welcoming errors.

Participants generated the following list of learning points at the end of day 1 of the workshop on participatory methodology at the regional meeting:

- *People communicate differently*
- *Mapping allows ideas to be shared in a different way*
- *The difference between open and closed questions and to start with open questions*
- *Maps and institutional analysis can give more details than questionnaires*
- *Diagrams give more details but I am not sure that I would be able to use them without more practice*
- *Everything is new except mapping. Older people may be able to say more with diagrams than just words. We need more training to apply this successfully*
- *Mapping can bring relaxation and bring more details and information*
- *In future we will be more considerate about the type of photos we take*
- *It is possible to get more information without verbal means*
- *In future we will be able to more easily accept our mistakes.*

On the second day of the meeting, participants prepared to practise the participatory techniques they had learnt with project partner Lastavica's older beneficiaries, to enable them to use the techniques with confidence in their own countries, when they returned from the regional meeting. Lastavica's director explained how the programme developed, who the older people were and what the main activities were.

**Using livelihood analysis to gauge how pension income is used and relative living costs. An example of participatory techniques at work with older people**

Introduce the conversation by explaining that you are interested in how pension income is used

- Ask what the main items of expenditure are during a typical month and ask the respondent to identify objects to represent these items
- Provide a number of counters and ask the respondent to distribute them among the objects according to relative amounts spent on each
- Ask if there are other expenditures and prompt for more items
- Ask questions about the items and about changes over the seasons (for example heating or food bills may increase in winter). Ask for explanations of expenditures and encourage discussion and analysis
- When the conversation draws to a close, thank the respondent.

Team members asked questions to familiarise themselves with the programme. The team drew up a list of issues to investigate, and the most appropriate methods for these:

**Issues**

Access to services

- Access to health services
- Transport & legal services

**Method**

- Interview
- Mapping

Economic situation

- Pension
- Employment

- Interview
- Mapping
- Daily activity

Social Integration

- Isolation
- Living with family or alone
- Support networks

- Mapping
- Weekly activity
- Institutional diagram

After group discussions, the teams came together to collate information gathered. The teams synthesised the themes of inquiry and brainstormed significant findings. Statements were written on cards, sorted under headings and team members referred to notes from group work to write each section of the report.

The teams then discussed how the team itself and the methods used had worked in practice, and identified solutions for challenges faced. Problems faced with methodology are considered further in section 'Project evaluation and learning'.

Workshop participants considered how they could use participatory techniques to develop indicators so that older people could participate in monitoring proposed local activities. Under the three regional objectives developed by older people and their organisations, participants listed the issues faced by older people and considered which of these could realistically be changed within the timeframe available.

Each group worked on monitoring plans and explained how they proposed to use different participatory methods to monitor expected outcomes. (Examples are given in the box below).

#### Example A: Access to home care

Theme: Access to home care

Indicators: Number of home visits to older people  
Ratings (scores) by older people of the service received.

Who: About 30-50 older people and staff of NGO providing home care

When: Every 3 months

Method: Timeline of monthly activities  
Matrix ranking of types of care including home care .

Example of Matrix

CRITERIA	Type of service (to be decided)	Type of service (to be decided)	Home care
Cost to older person			
Level of care			
Other criteria decided by older people			

#### Example B: Access to institutions and services

Theme: Access to institutions and services  
Many older people are not aware of the health services available  
and they wait a long time for services.

Indicators: Number of hours older people wait for health service  
Number of services used by older people .

Who: 20 older people (10 men and 10 women) and project staff

When: Over three months on a monthly basis  
At the beginning and end of a 3 or 6 month period.

Method: Regular interview and construction of table  
Institutional analysis diagrams.

20 older people will plot numbers of hours waited for health services over 1 month as they make regular visits to the centre. To monitor access to all services, they will draw an institutional diagram showing all services used, talk about why they use services and how significant these services are to them. After 3 - 6 months the exercise will be repeated and any changes, such as new services, will be discussed.

At the Belgrade meeting, participants also learnt about self-help initiatives for older people from the 'Social Gerontology and Gerontogics Association of Slovenia' (SGGAS), a member of the Slovene National Network under HelpAge International's 9-country programme in the region (see box below). The organisation works to improve quality of life for older people in the field of interpersonal relationships and intergenerational connectedness and trains volunteers to supervise local networks of older people's self-help groups. Participants asked questions and developed an understanding of how this model could be translated into their own country context.

#### Self-help groups for older people - SGGAS model

- Up to ten people per group; over 400 groups
- Meets once a week
- Each group is supervised by 2 trained supervisors of middle age to help them prepare for their own old age
- Basic activity is discussion. Other activities include singing, reading, exercising, excursions, praying, dancing, creative workshops
- Supported by local and national networks and training
- Promoting social inclusion of older people especially through intergenerational summer camps
- Model adapted according to specifics of local environment
- Financed largely by Slovene Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs and locally by municipalities.

#### Training in Advocacy

In November 2004, participants from the CARDS countries gathered in Tirana to review project activities to-date and develop their understanding of how to advocate effectively to local and national government and the media. Older beneficiaries or volunteers of each of the five project partners participated. The workshop helped participants to consider how they could collect evidence of older people's situations, present it in different media and engage with government in dialogue built on factual, evidence-based material and coupled with positive, constructive ideas for realistic practical change.



1 October 2004: Older people in Split distributed 2,500 tangerines with a sticker 'International Day of Older People'  
Udruga MI, Croatia

The advocacy theme of the workshop was particularly pertinent to major issues identified in CARDS Country Strategy Papers for the four project countries:

- The need to strengthen civil society to participate in policy debate and hold government agencies accountable, starting with initiating dialogue between government and civil society
- The need to engage civil society in the decentralisation of public services, including social welfare
- The need to improve social assistance to ensure that benefits are oriented to the most vulnerable groups, including older people, refugees/returnees and minorities
- The need to address issues relating to refugee and IDP rights, particularly in relation to returns.

This relevance to the CARDS papers was emphasised by a representative from the EU Delegation in Albania, who reported the EU's commitment to improving the lives of the most vulnerable sections of the population - including older people - and described how the focus of EU activity was set to shift further towards supporting social and economic issues over the next few years.

Following a review of activities by country, participants considered who the key stakeholders influencing older people in each country are, and the role of evidence-based advocacy in influencing them.

Participants shared some **key features of advocacy** based on their own experience:

- *It is long-term sustainable change*
- *Evidence is critical to support advocacy campaigns*
- *A two-way process (offering something, not just demanding)*
- *Resources are needed for advocacy*
- *It gives examples of good practice*
- *Older people speak on behalf of themselves*
- *Advocacy is aware of its audience/s and uses appropriate methods.*

Participants identified the following **characteristics of evidence used in advocacy activities**:

- *Clear sources*
- *Data*
- *Case studies*
- *Examples of good practice*
- *Older people speaking for themselves*
- *Individual, group and community impact of advocacy*
- *Being aware of the audience and what is appropriate for the audience.*

Participants identified a range of **methods for getting good evidence to support advocacy** to inform the collection of evidence through local activities:

- *Interviews with groups of older people, older people speaking up about themselves*
- *Country research/data to support opinions*
- *Pilot projects- collecting evidence from our projects*
- *Surveys/economic analysis*
- *Understanding existing legislation*
- *Information from hospitals, municipalities and Ministry of Health*
- *Proportion of hospital beds occupied by older people*
- *Amount of personal income spent on medication*
- *Questionnaires, interviews, focus groups*
- *Data about disability and mental health*
- *Mortality rates.*

Participants at the regional meeting in Tirana worked in country groups to brainstorm **ideas for ensuring older people participate fully in advocacy activities**. They were asked to interview older people in their groups for ideas:

- Giving information to older people
- Invite older people to talk about their situation, needs and other issues
- Ask for regular TV/radio sessions where older people are speaking for themselves
- Form national/local Boards of older people
- Get older people acquainted with their rights as outlined in national legislation and international agreements
- Use the relationships of older people (their status in the community)
- Involve older people in researching the issues that concern them
- Have a representative of older people on local authority Boards
- Support older people to be involved in associations and groups (giving them a collective voice)
- Older people disseminating information in their communities.

Based on a definition of a 'stakeholder' developed in plenary, small groups were formed according to organisation. One participant interviewed the older person in their group, using open-ended questions to generate a list of possible stakeholders that was shared in plenary.

Participants were then introduced to a matrix for analysing the relative interest and influence of each stakeholder. Working in organisational groups the participants again interviewed the older person to ascertain the following information about each stakeholder:

1. Influence on older people's situations
2. Level of interest in older people's situation.

Older people then guided NGO representatives to place stakeholders in a matrix that helped to identify:

- Those who are interested but not influential (often other older people at the start of our work, but they could become more influential by working collectively)
- Those who are influential but not interested (who could be the target of advocacy work)
- Those who are interested and influential (who could be our main allies in advocacy work)
- Those who are not interested and not influential (who are a low priority for advocacy work).

The following examples illustrate how older people interviewed, assessed the relative interest and influence of various stakeholders in their communities/countries.

### Croatia

	High Influence	Low Influence
High Interest	Association 'MI' Family Public transport Health Municipality	Bank Older people's home Communal services
Low Interest	Government Self-help group Health and pension insurance	Media Other NGOs Private companies Centre for social care

## Bosnia and Herzegovina

	High Influence	Low Influence
High Interest	High Representative Mayor	Older people NGOs Centre for Social Assistance Red Cross Schools
Low Interest	Ministries Hospitals/Health institutions Media	Communal services Public services

As predicted, in all cases older people identified local and national government as high influence stakeholders. Participants went on to share experience of working with various state bodies, the challenges they face (outlined in section 'Project evaluation and learning') and some of the strategies that can be adopted for addressing these.

Participants worked in three groups to brainstorm solutions to the top three challenges of working with government (one challenge listed in box below). After a few minutes, each group moved to the next table to read the ideas developed by the previous group and add more ideas. A few minutes later the groups moved once more to repeat the exercise, so that each group suggested possible strategies for each of the challenges.

### Challenge 2. Lack of understanding about the issue of older people within Government

Recommended actions:

- Provide information about the work of our NGO.
- Provide information about the situation of older people, local communities, research about pensions.
- Inviting them to events organised for and by older people.
- Inviting and informing them about national meetings.
- Identify the persons who are directly involved in older people's issues and transfer them to being allies.
- Identify their interests and tailor your requests accordingly.
- Be simple, realistic and time-bound.
- Present successful examples.
- Mobilise older people to take an active part in the process.
- Involve educational institutions as well as media.
- Sensitise the local community/public.

### Training in Working with the Media

Another key stakeholder identified in all countries was the media, which it was recognised, can play a significant role in influencing public opinion towards older people and mobilising government to take action.

Two groups developed mini-dramas on representation of older people in the media. A third group (of older participants) developed a mini-drama based on what older people would like from the media. The exercise illustrated how older people are presented as a burden, in need of welfare, unwanted; but older people want to be seen as creative and contributing to their communities.

A local journalist from DEKA Press gave a presentation on the Inverted Pyramid. Journalists use this technique as a model for writing articles. In general, this model reminds the writer to:

- Summarise important information at the beginning of the release. The reader should be able to grasp the point of the release by reading the first sentence. This is the lead statement.
- Follow with details that back-up or confirm the lead statement of the release.
- Include less important-yet relevant and interesting-information last.

The model (in the box above) gives older people and NGOs guidance on communication with the media.

Participants discussed the following points on working with the media:

- *Develop good relations with people in the media.*
- *Use press releases to send information (making use of the inverted pyramid technique, where the most important information is placed at the beginning).*
- *Try to educate media people about ageing issues - invite them to events and give them information.*
- *Enable older people to speak for themselves.*

### **Older people's rights exercise**

Get people into five groups, and give each group one of the five UN principles for Older People (including sub-sections). Ask each group to discuss and identify ways in which the principle is being upheld in their country and ways in which it is being abused.

Most governments including all four governments represented in the CARDS project signed up to the UN International Plan of Action on Ageing in Madrid in 2002 and the UN Economic Commission for European Regional Implementation. These documents can be used as the basis of discussions with Government.

In addition to the two planned regional meetings, a final regional meeting took place in Split in May 2005. This meeting gave partner representatives and older people from across the region the opportunity to come together to prepare this publication and to evaluate the project and learning from it.

## **Exchange visits**

Exchange visits between partners and older people in the region enabled participants to see other project activities to address older people's rights in practice, adapting models observed into their own context and consider new ways of working. In the case of the Bosnian exchange group, the experience actually helped them to appreciate the work they are already doing.

*'10 older people and only two younger representatives visited Serbia and Montenegro. The study visit helped older people's representatives from Bosnia and Herzegovina realise that they do very useful and necessary work for older people's well being in Bosnia. In spite of the difficult conditions and situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in spite of how few programmes exist for older people, the lack of the institutions, state care, etc. they realised that they substantially contribute to a better quality of life of older people. In Serbia and Montenegro they visited different programmes for older people (gerontology centre, centres for older people, pensioners union, home care programmes, etc) and were very impressed and at the same time, sad. They said: 'We will never have such programmes for older people'. Later on, through exchange of experience, the older people realised that even these programmes are insufficient and are not fully meeting the needs of older people. They realised that the self-help group and volunteering programme they have in Bosnia and Herzegovina is of great importance to older people. The study visit had an empowering impact on the Bosnian older people. Representatives from Bosnia and Herzegovina learnt about income generation projects, they had ideas about what to do when they returned home, how to start similar projects. They also learnt about ways of improving the promotion of older people's capacities and usage of those capacities. They met older people who write novels, poems, older experts who work with children, who use their knowledge in mathematics, English, to help children with learning difficulties, etc.*

From the report of Bosnian partner Osmijeh after their visit to Serbia and Montenegro in December 2004.



When beneficiaries and staff from Serbian partner organisations, Lastavica and Viktorija visited Bosnian partner, Osmijeh, they also took with them representatives of the NGO network and were particularly interested in the way that older volunteers were contributing to their local communities.

*'Visiting the field, we had the opportunity to evaluate close up the situation and success of Osmijeh's work. The beneficiaries that went to Gračanica will make their own contributions to develop greater tolerance towards other national groups by passing on their experiences on the exchange visit to our local community. Some of the actions that we saw in Gračanica will provide good examples for our beneficiaries on how to organise larger scale actions to help themselves and their own communities. The organisations will apply this experience in their own programmes and will improve some activities (including more attention towards volunteers, for example). The visit also gave us good practical examples of how we could further influence local government to change the existing laws in the interest of older people.'*

From the report of Lastavica, following their visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina in April 2005

## **Newsletters**

Newsletters coordinated by the South East Europe office based in Ljubljana provided another important outlet for older people and their organisations in the four CARDS countries, together with older people and their organisations in Bulgaria, Macedonia, Moldova, Romania and Slovenia to share experience of local activities and local and national events, from the perspective of older people themselves.

The newsletters – translated into project languages – are distributed to a variety of key stakeholders in each country including older people, NGOs and national network members, local and national government and donor organisations. Three issues have been produced over the past eighteen months.

## **Local activities**

Local groups set up and ran initiatives using skills and ideas developed at regional meetings to test models of **self-help** and **advocacy** addressing discrimination against older people. The focus and scope of these activities were determined at consultation meetings, to target forms of discrimination prioritised by older people themselves. At consultation meetings with NGOs and other stakeholders (at which older people's representatives participated), participants developed these ideas into realistic local activities using their understanding of the local working environment for civil society organisations.

The process of developing and implementing the first round of local self-help activities was designed to build the skills and confidence of older people working together to help each other, and in so doing, collect a body of evidence through monitoring processes to use in challenging stereotypes of older people and their capacities in their communities. One condition of receiving the small local activities grant was that these activities were subject to systematic participatory monitoring by older people themselves, using learning and facilitation skills of participants at the Belgrade regional workshop.

The following outlines the focus of local self-help activities selected by older people and their organisations:

COUNTRY	SELF-HELP ACTIVITIES	INDICATORS	LINKAGE TO NATIONAL PLANS
<b>ALBANIA</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Home visits by older volunteers /retired healthcare professionals</li> <li>2. Assistance for accessing services</li> <li>3. Education for older people about their health and well-being</li> <li>4. Social events for self-help groups.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of older people in self-help groups</li> <li>- Levels of well-being among older people in self-help groups</li> <li>- Number of older people involved in awareness-raising campaign.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Older people will have increased access to appropriate public services.</li> <li>- Older people's needs and contributions are recognised through changed attitudes.</li> </ul>
<b>BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Set up counselling services to give legal, social and health advice to older people:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Training mentors/ group leaders</li> <li>- Creation of self-help groups</li> <li>- Older people volunteering</li> <li>- Home visits.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Promote active participation of older people in communities:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Self-help groups</li> <li>- Volunteering in the community</li> <li>- Media promotion.</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Strengthen the networking of organisations.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of people referred to public services</li> <li>- Number of refusals by services to meet older people's needs</li> <li>- Number of older people in self-help groups</li> <li>- Number of older people consulted</li> <li>- Number of intergenerational projects in the area</li> <li>- Media articles and TV programmes showing positive attitudes to older people.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Older people have increased access to appropriate public services.</li> <li>- Older people's contributions and needs are recognised through changed attitudes in communities.</li> </ul>
<b>CROATIA</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Actions by older people on October 1st and beyond</li> <li>2. Reduction in isolation -lectures on needs of older people, training volunteers, volunteer activities with older people, evaluation</li> <li>3. Negotiations to improve access to public services</li> <li>4. Making posters and billboards to promote awareness of older people's situation on and after 1<sup>st</sup> October.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Media coverage on older people</li> <li>- Numbers of older people visited in homes by volunteers</li> <li>- Feedback from older people on services received</li> <li>- Number of people attending lectures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Older people's needs and contributions are recognised through changed attitudes.</li> <li>- Older people have increased access to appropriate public services.</li> </ul>
<b>SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Creative self-help groups and inter-generation activities</li> <li>2. Self-help groups with collective centres</li> <li>3. Self-help groups for accessing public services</li> <li>4. Participatory research with older people.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Research results</li> <li>- Media coverage</li> <li>- Reports from meetings with local/national authorities</li> <li>- Number of groups formed</li> <li>- Number of older people in self-help groups</li> <li>- Number of older people receiving home visits</li> <li>- Articles on ageing in media</li> <li>- Testimonies of older people</li> <li>- Evidence for public response to the campaign.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Older people have increased access to appropriate public services.</li> <li>- Older people's needs and contributions are recognised through changed attitudes.</li> </ul>

The following diagram provides a typology of different self-help local activities undertaken by older people and their organisations:

	<b>SELF-HELP GROUPS (CREATIVE)</b>	<b>ACCESSING SERVICES</b>	<b>HOME VISITING</b>	<b>SELF-HELP GROUPS RUN BY OLDER PEOPLE</b>
<b>FEATURES</b>	These groups included older people gathering to read and write poetry, sing or produce handi-crafts.	Network members and older people themselves influenced the local administration to try to solve the problem of unequal access to services and to ensure some material pre-conditions.	Volunteers - usually older people themselves - visited to provide company for other older people who live alone, help with house-work, collection of groceries and medication and in some cases, health checks.	Older people meet with each other to support each other and to discuss their concerns, share experiences and in some cases to plan activities.
<b>COUNTRY</b>				
<b>ALBANIA</b>	On 1 <sup>st</sup> October a ceremony took place involving older artists to raise the profile of older people's contributions to Albanian society.	There have been meetings with the Ministry of Health, and a Commission has been established with representatives from the Ministries of Health and of Work and Social Welfare, the Pensioners Association and those working in the field of geriatrics. There have also been contacts and meetings with local government and hospitals.	Retired healthcare professionals volunteer to provide support to older people in their homes in the Tirana region and village of Katund Iri.	AAGG and Pensioners' Association worked together to establish self-help groups of older people: 5 in Tirana and 1 in a nearby village.
<b>BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA</b>		Agreements were made with relevant institutions to give advice and improve access to services and benefits for older people visited by volunteers. Older people access legal, social and other advice through volunteer counsellors. Database of beneficiaries develops clearer picture of older people's needs from services.	Training of group leaders took place and outreach teams were set up for the first time.	Through 12 self-help groups' presentations older people are realising their rights. Activities make older people more visible and they have a higher profile in the community.  Older people are developing other projects in the community, for example: to improve seats at bus stops.

	SELF-HELP GROUPS (CREATIVE)	ACCESSING SERVICES/ RAISING AWARENESS	HOME VISITING	SELF-HELP GROUPS RUN BY OLDER PEOPLE
COUNTRY				
CROATIA		<p>Conference on 1<sup>st</sup> October. Older people distributed 2,500 tangerines with a sticker with the International Day of Older People on, together with leaflets. Exhibition children's drawings from primary schools based on theme 'I love my grandma and grandpa'.</p> <p>Talks took place on topics suggested by older people.</p> <p>Identification of new beneficiaries took place through co-operation with the Centres for Social Welfare and older people's homes.</p>	<p>- Group of volunteers visit older people weekly to socialise, go shopping, buy medication, pay bills. Users can hardly walk or are sick older people who are isolated and alone.</p> <p>- Volunteers have a supervisor who provides supervision twice per month. A database of beneficiaries was developed.</p>	<p>Older people meet with representatives of Udruga MI to monitor and determine the future direction of activities.</p>
SERBIA AND MONTE-NEGRO	<p>Older people met to preserve traditions in groups that respect cultural differences and customs from different heritages. (Lastavica)</p> <p>Older people in care, collective centres and private homes socialised together for cultural activities. (Viktorija)</p> <p>Older people have the opportunity to relax together and develop friendships through and after joint activities.</p>	<p>Self-help groups provided information so that their members and beneficiaries could get easier and better access to services, including information on where to go and documentation needed. (Viktorija)</p> <p>Meetings with local government and older people have led to information sharing with local government service providers. (Lastavica and Viktorija)</p> <p>At the request of older people, Viktorija also arranged for older people to have access to health counselors and hairdressers in the collective centres and in private homes.</p>	<p>- Home visiting started to target the most vulnerable older people through self-help groups (e.g. refugees)</p> <p>- Older volunteers visit older people who are sick and were trained to measure blood sugar levels and blood pressure for other older people. (Lastavica)</p>	<p>Viktorija provided a venue and older people ran their own self-help groups.</p> <p>IDPs/ refugees got involved in self-help groups and mixed with older people from other circumstances. (Viktorija)</p>

In Serbia and Montenegro, project partner Viktorija and its older beneficiaries developed specific self-help group activities with refugees from collective centres. These self-help groups displayed unique characteristics as a result of the structure provided by the collective centres themselves and the more positive experience many of the older refugees had of NGOs.

The evaluation of self-help local activities took place at the second round of consultation meetings with older people and forms part of section 'Project evaluation and learning'.

NGO, Lastavica and children from the primary school, 'Vuk Karadjic' of Surcin celebrated the 1st October, Day of Older people together. 15 little actors presented a show 'A Five Layer Cake', two members of the Lastavica Literary Club read their poems and there was an exhibition of children's art works depicting older people in the school hall. In order to promote the International Day of Older People as much as possible, Lastavica designed a number of posters with positive messages related to the life and rights of older people, as well as two posters on inter-generational solidarity, promoting collaboration between young and older people. This action is the first joint activity of Lastavica and the local primary school.

Collecting evidence from older people on the successes and challenges they faced in implementing local self-help activities, older people and their NGOs then identified the specific focus required for second round local activities in advocacy. At the second round of consultation meetings with NGOs and stakeholders, older people were able to present their self-help activities and the challenges they faced to government and other NGOs or public bodies, and so increase understanding of older people's issues.

The following local advocacy activities have been developed by country and were evaluated by project partners and older people in Split in May 2005.

COUNTRY	ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES	INDICATORS	LINKAGE TO NATIONAL PLANS
<b>ALBANIA</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotion of contribution and achievements of older people by sensitising the media.</li> <li>Assuring that the voice of older people is heard at local level, including organising round tables with representatives of municipality of Tirana and mini-municipalities. To organise a separate roundtable in the village of Katund I Ri.</li> <li>Develop a network of NGOs and state institutions, working with older people. To complete a mapping exercise of information available about older people and to identify the most isolated and poor sections of the older population.</li> <li>Assuring that the voice of the older people is heard at the governmental level through national commission.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with older beneficiaries and volunteers (focus groups and case studies)</li> <li>Follow up questionnaire</li> <li>Case studies documented illustrating impact of activities on older people's lives</li> <li>Number of older people involved in awareness-raising campaign</li> <li>Evaluation forms filled in by meeting and roundtable participants</li> <li>Documented outputs from meetings include timetable of meetings, minutes of meetings, attendance lists, draft action plans.</li> </ul>	<p>Older people's contributions and needs are recognised through changed attitudes in community.</p> <p>Older people will have increased access to appropriate public services.</p> <p>Reduction in discrimination against older people in their families and communities.</p>
<b>BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing a guidebook for other NGOs, centres for social work and government social affairs staff, older peoples' self-help groups and users, on how to implement a counselling centre programme.</li> <li>Organising a one-day meeting with centres for social work to strengthen collaboration with them</li> <li>Producing a pamphlet of the Madrid Plan and Berlin Regional Strategy for distribution to a similar audience to the guidebook.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of older people receiving the consultations and assistance</li> <li>Number of older people active in community</li> <li>Number of older people active in training self-help groups</li> <li>Number of disabled and isolated older people contacted</li> <li>Number of intergenerational projects in the area</li> <li>Media coverage about older people</li> <li>Number of leaflets distributed.</li> </ul>	<p>Changing attitudes towards older people and identifying their needs and contributions.</p> <p>Improving older people's access to public services.</p>
<b>CROATIA</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To organise regular meetings with the Municipality to increase access to appropriate public services, with reference to the effective provision of nursing care to vulnerable older people and the organisation of more elderly-friendly methods of payment of bills and obtaining identify cards.</li> <li>Reduction in isolation by promoting volunteer work for vulnerable older people using media and working in collaboration with the association of pensioners.</li> <li>National Network development by collating information about activities of all organisations working with older people in Croatia; distributing key international and national policy documents and capacity building meetings on advocacy, participatory research, fundraising.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Written agenda, strategy and minutes of meetings with local authorities</li> <li>Media coverage about older people. Older people's feedback on this coverage</li> <li>Numbers of volunteers</li> <li>Numbers of home visits</li> <li>Database of information detailing information about older people's organisations.</li> </ul>	<p>Changing attitudes towards older people and identifying their needs and contributions.</p> <p>Improving older people's access to public services.</p>
<b>SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Four roundtables with local authorities to improve understanding of older people's needs and contributions (Viktorija).</li> <li>Stickers distributed in public places to reserve seats for older people (Viktorija).</li> <li>Advocacy consultation and campaign with older people from collective centres (Viktorija).</li> <li>Older people stage cultural event in community (Lastavica).</li> <li>Database of organisations working with older people throughout the country. This will be made available on the internet (Lastavica).</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minutes of meetings with local authorities and older people</li> <li>Number of community members attending cultural event</li> <li>Number of older people participating in events</li> <li>Feedback in local media and from older people on cultural event</li> <li>Finalised database of NGOs on website.</li> </ul>	<p>Older people have increased access to appropriate public services.</p> <p>Older people's needs and contributions are recognised through changed attitudes.</p>

## Project evaluation and learning

In this section, we draw upon evaluations of the project partners and older people themselves to assess the successes and challenges faced in working to improve the quality of life of disadvantaged older people and to capture some of the learning gained by these groups, which can be used by Civil Society Organisations seeking to replicate project activities in or beyond the region.

The objective of the project was to strengthen civil society and improve the quality of life of disadvantaged older people in the four project countries by supporting the development of civil society and enabling older people to promote their rights as citizens and raise awareness of their situation and needs. Older people, their NGOs, project stakeholders and HelpAge International worked towards this objective through the following stages and using project tools outlined in section 'Project tools for tackling discrimination against older people':

- Building capacity of older people's NGOs and networks of disadvantaged older people
- Tackling discrimination through local-level action
- Scaling up to national-level action
- Establishing regional contact, sharing and mutual learning.

The successes and challenges of this approach are examined under the headings listed below:

- Evaluation of Project Tools
- Evaluation of Organisational Factors

The section then looks at the impact of the project on older people, as defined by older people themselves, before considering the likely sustainability of project achievements.

At the end of this section, older people, partner organisations and HelpAge International draw some conclusions about the situation of older people in the four project countries, the impact that project activities had on the situation of older people, and factors and actions that influence the impact of these activities. This section ends with some recommendations to organisations seeking to replicate this project using the project tools outlined in section 'Project tools for tackling discrimination against older people'. In the section 'Recommendations', recommendations are made for actions by external stakeholders that would enable older people to promote their rights as citizens and raise awareness of their situation and needs, thus further improving the quality of life of disadvantaged older people in the four project countries.

### Evaluation of Project Tools

The following project tools relate to the tools identified in section 'Project tools for tackling discrimination against older people'. Where a specific evaluation relates to the findings of one of the national networks or partner organisations involved, this is clearly indicated in italics.

### Consultations with older people

#### **Strengths:**

- The participatory approach with older people was a new style of working for the partner organisation, and a new approach for the country.
- Older people responded positively to the consultations and were willing to talk openly about most of their problems, needs and ideas. *The Bosnian team indicated that older people were unwilling to talk about taboo subjects such as elder abuse in families.*
- Older people were very motivated to work in a participatory way through seminars and groups. Older people found the meetings empowering and felt that finally someone is listening to them.

*'They prepared for the meeting as something very important in their lives.'*

Representative of partner organisation, Lastavica, Serbia and Montenegro.

*'We were not used to this kind of meeting, but the process helped us to feel comfortable to talk. We felt free to speak our minds.'*

Older participant from Bosnia and Herzegovina at Split Regional Meeting.

*'We felt afraid before the consultation started. It felt like we were going to an exam. But the process made us feel comfortable to speak.'*

Older participant from Serbia at Split Regional Meeting.

- Older people respected the rules and were always there on time. *Both the representatives from Albania at the Tirana Regional Meeting and again at the Split Regional Meeting highlighted that it was unusual for participants at public meetings to arrive on time.*
- The conclusions of these meetings were shared widely with NGOs and the public. *In Bosnia the core group shared the conclusions with almost 10,000 older people.*

### **Challenges of using Participatory Techniques with Older People: Belgrade Regional Meeting, July 2004**

The following challenges were identified when partner organisation representatives put participatory techniques into practice prior to using these in consultation meetings with older people.

- What was good about the way you used the methods?
- What was good about the way you worked as a team?

The teams then spent a few minutes coming up with solutions to the problems of other teams before reporting back. The following are a selection of problems and solutions discussed:

#### **Problems with using the methods:**

Problem 1: Some older people cannot do graphical work.

Solution: More warm up. The drawing should be used simply to facilitate group discussion.

Problem 2: It is difficult to get started and is awkward at the beginning.

Solution: Have a good introduction and make connections with people before starting.

#### **Problems with working as a team:**

Problem 1: The team cannot agree on whether there was a problem or not.

Solution: Clarify in advance team member roles. Make time for team building.

Problem 2: The methods require a combination of skills.

Solution: Practice in team working, and developing active listening skills are needed.



Workshop on participatory research techniques with beneficiaries at Lastavica, Serbia and Montenegro

**Challenges:**

- Older people may feel anxious and uncomfortable talking about their problems.
- For older people with poor health it is an effort to be at a long meeting.
- Older people may not have accurate information to talk knowledgeably about their rights and entitlements.
- We may find older people who are able to speak up, but they may not be representative of older people as a whole. The older people most in need rarely speak up - they cannot attend meetings.  
*AAGG found that in Albania, some of the most vulnerable (including women, and those from rural areas) did not participate in the first meeting and efforts had to be made to ensure that these groups could participate.*
- Older people may lack initiative or have low levels of motivation.
- Older people may initially be sceptical about civil society activities because they are used to dealing with the State.
- Different older people may participate from one meeting to the next, which means that the same ground needs to be covered again.

**Learning: Consultations with Older People**

- Meeting facilitators must be carefully selected and trained.
- Attention must be paid to the physical and psychological needs of older people attending meetings.
- Meetings must be short, concise, using accessible language and venues.
- Day Centres can enhance the participation of older people in consultation and project activities.
- Older people are more likely to feel motivated to participate if they have fun at meetings!
- Older people are more likely to feel motivated if they see real results and activities.
- Older people were active in the second round of Consultation Meetings because they were part of something.
- Continuity is important. Regular meetings should take place -not just once or twice a year.
- Different approaches work in different places. In Serbia the meetings took place with existing beneficiaries and volunteers; in Croatia the meetings involved a wider group.

**Consultation meetings with NGOs and development of national networks****Strengths:**

- The participation of older people as rapporteurs from the consultation meetings with older people kept the consultation meetings with NGOs focussed on the priorities of older people themselves.
- Where media representatives were present to cover meetings, it was possible to raise the profile of older people's issues at a local and national level.
- NGOs and government shared information about their current activities and challenges faced in working with older people. This enabled greater co-operation between participants at a local and national level and created possibilities for identifying joint activities.
- Bringing together NGOs and Civil Society Organisations with a shared interest in older people enabled the creation of non-governmental lobbies in relation to government.
- Consultation meetings and the development of national networks allowed smaller or less mature NGOs to participate and learn something new. In some cases, these NGOs were even able to access additional funding through meeting representatives of ministries at these events.
- Meeting with other NGOs that faced the same challenges in their work, reassured and motivated members to continue with their work.

**Challenges:**

- Some of the project partners felt that there was a problem with the transparency of the national networks and questions were asked about why their organisation had been selected to lead this project's activities in their country.
- In some cases, NGOs have little faith in networks because they are involved in so many and often with little evident benefit. Some organisations ceased to be involved in the network when they realised there were no funds available, because they are too busy fighting for their organisation's survival.
- In several of the countries, few NGOs work with older people, despite the need for this work.
- In some countries, there is a gap in co-operation between NGOs and government and government may lack confidence towards NGOs.
- *In Serbia the network had already been formed and the challenge was how to make it work more effectively. The partner organisations felt that the network needed a good structure, clear roles and activities with some funding to support its joint activities.*



### Learning: Developing and Sustaining National Networks on Ageing

- **Motivating members:** Sustaining the active involvement of network members is challenging; they need to see benefits and results from their participation.
- **Identifying common interests/common causes:** This is crucial in ensuring the commitment of network members and providing some return on the investment they are making to the network. Advocating for the development of a national plan on ageing is a common cause amongst network members in all four CARDS countries.
- **Start small and build:** Initially select some activities that are achievable in order to demonstrate the value of networking and collaboration. Examples are developing a database of NGOs and other civil society groups working with older people, exchanging information, reports, research studies, organising joint training sessions and consultations with key players such as the media, etc.
- **Leadership, structural and organisational issues:** It is crucial that there is consensus amongst network members on the role and functions of the network and how the network will be led and by whom. Developing an action plan is a vital step. Continuity is very important which includes ensuring that regular meetings are held. These 'rule book' or procedural issues can be formalised through a memorandum of understanding which each member signs.
- **Transparency is vital:** It is important that the network membership is open to any civil society group that is currently involved or plans to work with older people and that contact is established with government authorities. Meetings, action plans and other activities should be well documented and widely shared with relevant stakeholders.
- **Sharing resources as much as possible:** Resources which are made available to the network should be shared as much as possible, based on the agreed upon organisational arrangements and action plan.
- **Advocacy as an essential network function:** An essential component of the project and one of the main functions of the national networks on ageing is advocating for the rights and well being of older people.
  - Project experience in Albania demonstrated that through appropriate advocacy and collaboration, national networks can get the support of local and national government in developing policies and allocating resources for vulnerable older people.
  - Advocacy can be an important tool in ensuring that existing laws are implemented.
  - A key aspect of an advocacy strategy is working with the media, building partnerships with and sensitising the media to influence decision makers on older people's issues.

The following table represents the results of discussions between older people and partner organisation representatives at the Tirana Regional Meeting in November 2004.

### CHALLENGES OF WORKING WITH GOVERNMENT

<p><b><u>ALBANIA</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of concern and understanding for older people's problems by local and central government.</li> <li>- Lack of professionalism of health and social workers dealing with older people.</li> <li>- Lack of cohesion and identity of older people as a group (older people are unable to create a critical mass capable of representing their demands to government).</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More should be done by both sides to understand what partnership is.</li> <li>- NGOs often lack the skills to work effectively with government.</li> <li>- Government does not always understand the purpose of NGOs.</li> <li>- Government often has misconceptions about the financing of NGOs and their programmes.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>CROATIA</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- At times, personnel in local and national government seem to change frequently.</li> <li>- NGOs need a responsible person in local government to have a 'sympathetic ear' to older people's issues.</li> <li>- Legislation does not always cover older people, so that individuals fail to get services.</li> <li>- The state apparatus can be slow to react to solving problems of older people.</li> <li>- Limited financial resources and lack of finance in government for programmes with older people.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Frequent changes in personnel in local government.</li> <li>- Lack of knowledge and practice among decision makers and no reflection on possible negative effects of their actions.</li> <li>- Limited understanding and knowledge of NGOs operating in the local community or sector.</li> <li>- Suspicion towards NGOs.</li> <li>- Insufficient resources at local level.</li> <li>- Local institutions are often governed by centralised powers and difficult to influence.</li> </ul>

## Local activities in self-help

### Strengths:

- Self-help activities promoted a sense of humanity and voluntarism.

*'Some of the most vulnerable older people felt supported within the community; it was not just good words...'*

Older participant from Bosnia, Split Regional Meeting.

### Evaluation of Self-help Groups by Older Participants at the Second Round Consultation Meeting with Older People, Kragujevac, Serbia, February 2005

#### Strengths:

- The collective centre structures lend themselves to self-help groups
- Self-help group mentors help older people in the collective centres access services
- Each apartment that older people live in has a resident family that helps with repairs
- Self-help groups are becoming stronger
- Some integration between other self-help groups and the one in the collective centre.

#### Challenges:

- The circumstances of these older people has changed recently in that many have been re-located
- Collective centres have left many older people without an ability to survive alone
- There is ambiguity over the status of these older people whilst changing from 'refugee' to Serbian citizens. Some unwillingness by older people to make this change even though they will access additional rights.

#### Obstacles (to form the basis of advocacy activities):

- Convincing older people from collective centres to access the status and rights they are entitled to
- Fear of uncertainty
- Varied economic situations of older people from collective centres
- Difficulties in motivating these older people
- Slow process of transition between collective centres and moving to apartments
- Lack of understanding in wider community about situation of refugees
- Lack of funds inside the civil society sector.

- The self-help initiative is a contribution towards filling gaps in services that are not filled by government or the community and enables older people improved access to existing services.
- *In Bosnia the further development of self-help groups led to the setting up of outreach teams to reach more vulnerable and isolated older people.*
- Self-help activities show government and communities that older people can take positive action.
- Self-help groups enable older people to reintegrate into the community.
- Younger people are willing to become involved to implement activities.
- The self-help approach enabled organisations working with older people to get the bigger picture about older people, to gain more information on older people in their locality.
- Older people welcomed these local activities and are fully involved in making the activities happen. There is a shift from organisations doing things for older people, to older people doing things on their own - this gave a sense of fulfilment and confirmation of their value.
- *According to older volunteers and staff from Viktorija in Kragujevac, Serbia, self-help groups in collective centres were a significant success and a replicable model given that there are a large percentage of older people in collective centres.*

**Challenges:**

- Where does the initiative come from? To what extent is it self-help without the support of the NGO? Some self-help groups will disappear if support from the NGO does not continue. The approach is new and quite fragile - it needs time to become sustainable.
- *In Albania prescriptions given by volunteer physicians were not recognised, (but negotiations are taking place with the Ministry of Health about this).*
- Older people are wary about joining groups. Time, trust and respect towards the organisation needs to be built.
- *People who live in collective centres for a long time get fed up with each other, which makes working in self-help groups more difficult. It is easier once they are re-settled (Viktorija, Kragujevac, Serbia).*

**Learning: Local Activities in Self-Help**

- Money is less important than the shift to a humanitarian approach that is promoted through this approach.
- Older people are more empowered through local activities that they think of and participate in.
- Home visiting is very important for the most vulnerable older people; it meets social and emotional needs.
- Self-help initiatives are meeting real needs identified by older people.
- Older people may not be comfortable with modern methods of communication (e.g. telephone) and NGOs and government service providers may need to adapt to their needs and realities.
- It is important to consider older people's information networks - it is not enough to advertise on a wall, or to tell people that there will be a meeting next month.
- Retired people can be a good support to self-help groups (e.g. health or legal professionals). They have free time, and involvement in the groups can give them a reward through being active and useful.
- As their needs and contributions become more visible in the community/country through self-help activities, older people begin to fight for their own rights.

**Local activities in advocacy****Strengths:**

- The activities have built the self-esteem of older people.
- There is increased interest from the local community towards older people.
- *There was a rapid positive reaction from government and local authorities in Albania after the local activities in advocacy (meetings and national conferences). On a local level there is a joint platform and a new service from the Municipality of Tirana that provides free transport for older people. At central level a draft document has been prepared for the reorganisation of geriatric services, and there are plans for a training project with doctors on older people's health needs.*
- *In Albania, older people's organisations and the media identified common interests and good relations have been established (the media wanted positive stories from civil society).*
- *In Croatia a representative of the Ministry of Family, Defenders and Intergenerational Solidarity attended a workshop on advocacy. This brought about work on a national programme of care for older people.*
- *In Serbia there is a strategy to reduce poverty amongst older people, and Viktorija succeeded in having self-help included as one of the points.*
- *Older people's achievements in the creative self-help groups were showcased at an exhibition of their work in Belgrade and a book of poetry by an older woman has been published (Lastavica).*

**Challenges:**

- The project was too short to achieve many advocacy successes.
- The media can be challenging: they change stories to fit the perspective they have chosen and only take the information that they want.
- It is difficult to gather all the stakeholders and decision makers to meetings and inspire their interest prior to the event.

**Learning: Local Activities in Advocacy**

- It is important to identify decision-makers - but the individuals in power often change.
- The media are very 'tricky' and need to be educated about issues of older people.
- Meetings and events must be 'marketed' to interest and attract ministries and decision makers.
- Advocacy takes time and planning.
- Networks should aim to work with ministries on shared interests in a cooperative way. If progress is blocked, the media can be used to move the issues forward.
- Pressure to move forward can be created through involvement in local platforms.
- Governments should be asked questions about older people - EU accession can be used as a tool.

**Regional meetings****Strengths:**

- Regional meetings allowed us to recognise similar problems in other countries.
- Regional meetings provided us with an affirmation of working methods we are using.
- Meetings were honest and problems were shared.
- Meetings provided partner organisations with a common framework.

*'Sharing information is priceless.'*

Older participant, Split Regional Meeting, May 2005.

- Meetings were a good combination of education and working methods; we learned from each other.
- Regional meetings were participatory, and the methods used could be replicated in our work with older people and other groups.

**Challenges:**

- It is important to give older participants plenty of opportunities to present their ideas at regional meetings.
- Meetings need to recognise different paces of learning for participants and to avoid 'NGO speak'.
- Regional meetings should be regular to maintain cooperation and reinforce objectives and learning.

**Exchange visits****Strengths:**

- There were good learning experiences even when the priorities of organisations involved were different.
- It was an opportunity to see how different older people helped themselves; these lessons were 'taken home' with the visiting organisation.
- The amount of learning was varied, but visits were important because they were very motivating for the older people and NGO staff involved.

*'It is very important that older people are involved - the older people who participated talk about the experience for days and weeks.'*

Representative of Lastavica, Surčin, Serbia and Montenegro.

- This is the first time that many had visited a country from the former Yugoslavia since the war and it was important in building tolerance and understanding within the region.

**Challenges:**

- Some older people saw participation in international exchanges as a big challenge.



Representatives from Viktorija and Lastavica, Serbia and Montenegro, on exchange visit to Osmijeh, Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Newsletter****Strengths:**

- The newsletter fills an important gap for older people.

The following article appeared in the project newsletter in summer 2004 and was an important step in building good relations with the Tirana municipality:

Under the slogan, 'Older age without loneliness' (in Albanian, 'pleqeri pa vetmi'), a recent initiative aims to raise awareness of the need for integration of older people in the capital.

The last decade's dramatic changes have made older people in Albania among the most vulnerable and marginalised group in society. Pensions are too small to get the services they need, prices are comparable to European countries and health (and social) services are becoming more and more expensive. The initiative does not intend to solve all these problems, but it gives an important signal to a society that is in a hurry to leave older people behind. In over 300 bars and cafes in Tirana half-price coffee, tea, are now offered. Older people have access to free daily newspapers and bar owners have agreed to welcome older people during the mornings so that they can now meet with friends in a pleasant environment.

The Mayor of Tirana provided rewards for participating bars. At the launch of the initiative he said, 'This is just the beginning and we hope that other cities will follow our efforts to improve the quality of life of older people'.

- It contains good ideas for replication by older people and network members.
- It is a good advocacy tool. (See *box above*).
- *In Serbia all members of the network share articles regarding their work and this is a useful 'benefit' of being a network member.*

**Challenges:**

- More attention could be paid to how the newsletter is used.
- There needs to be clarity about the intended audience. Is it for older people, NGOs or government?
- Networks could consider themed newsletters with issues dedicated to working with media, self-help, etc.

**Organisational opportunities and challenges**

During the Split Regional Meeting in May 2005, whilst older people considered the impact of the project on older people in all four countries (see sub-section below), representatives of the partner organisations on the project considered the impact of the project on their organisations.

At the outset of the project, the partner organisations aimed to build their capacity to work in a participatory way with older people, to support self-help and advocacy activities and to foster or develop national networks of organisations committed to improving the situation of vulnerable older people through effective lobbying and co-operation with local and national government.

The organisations predicted the following **constraints** would hinder the likely success of the project:

- High staff turnover
- Lack of continuity in operations
- Communications and interpersonal relationships were also mentioned as occasional constraints
- Lobbying tends to be focussed on interest groups and less on a rights-based approach.

None of these challenges were highlighted in the final evaluation by the partner organisations. Instead the challenges were those outlined in the box below.

**How did your organisation benefit from involvement in the project?**

- The project empowered NGOs to focus on older people's issues and urged them to continue with older people's programmes.
- New approaches were introduced, leading to new visions in the NGOs.
- National networking was strengthened and organisations were able to work together to influence other stakeholders. Smaller and weaker organisations were given hope through the project.

**What challenges did your organisation face as a result of involvement in the project?**

- Several partner organisations felt that they experienced rivalry and suspicion of other NGOs due to the project.
- Within the timeframe, the organisation was not powerful enough to have an impact at the national level.
- NGO partners had too many activities to implement within the time available and alongside their existing activities.

## Project Impact

Older participants at the regional meeting in Split in May 2005 and who represented older people active in project activities in each of the project countries were invited to share their thoughts about the impact of the project on older people in their countries. The following box outlines the points highlighted in their discussion:

### Project Impact on Older People

#### In summary, older people described the project impact on older people as follows:

- They are not so isolated.
- They are reintegrated into society.
- They find it easier to access services.
- There is increased self-esteem for older people.
- The project raised awareness in communities of the needs of older people.
- There is increasing awareness in local government, which will bring longer-term benefits.

#### Some of the results they identified include:

- An increase in volunteer work towards older people.
- Older people feel cared for, and see that there are people trying to do something for them.
- Older people have received concrete, direct support e.g. home visits, volunteer physicians (Albania).
- A Counselling Centre was established that works on the rights of older people, and works against age discrimination (Bosnia).
- Self-help groups raised the quality of life of older people, helping them to organise their own lives, giving them structure. Older people are enabled to take care of themselves (Serbia).
- Some older volunteers visited the theatre for the first time in their lives (Serbia).
- Older people in Tirana (Albania) and Kragujevac (Serbia) access free public transport - older people achieved this by putting pressure on local authorities.
- For vulnerable older people the home visiting brings essential contact (e.g. one older woman had not seen anyone for some six months). They bring great emotional benefits to the vulnerable (Bosnia, Serbia).
- 'The project has increased awareness of the Association of Pensioners in Albania and empowered them to do something - before we were just talking. We have gained skills and ideas through this project for lobbying on the status of pensioners' (Albania).
- Databases have been set up to identify those most in need (Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia).
- One older man commented to volunteers during a home visit: 'I cannot believe that someone has thought about me after so long. I thought I had been forgotten' (Bosnia).

#### What are the benefits of older people organising in groups?

- 'We can hardly wait to meet on Monday to forget about the difficulties of our life, to share our problems and to have fun together' (Croatia).
- 'Group work decreases our sense of loneliness' (Serbia).
- 'Through our lobbying the government is providing pensions to those who retired after 1993' (Albania).
- Older people who were beneficiaries have now become volunteers, so that older people are helping each other and the most vulnerable.

*'Across the four countries older people share similar problems, and regional meetings can help to standardise strategies to tackle the problems. We learn from each other, from best practices, and implement in our own countries.'* Older participant, Albania.

## Sustainability of project achievement

Following the review of each of the project tools, the impact on organisations and older people involved in the project, older people and partner organisation representatives represented at the Split Regional Meeting considered the likely sustainability of the achievements and changes brought about through the project. These were brainstormed in country groups and some of the highlights are listed below.

### Albania

- Older people will continue to help each other through self-help groups, although support to these may be less systematic.
- The village self-help group is likely to continue. To replicate this in other villages would require additional funding and human resources.
- Free health support will continue, but is unlikely to expand.
- The organisation believes that the general public is starting to understand issues of older people and this creates a lasting basis for future activity.
- The organisation will continue to develop its good relations with the Municipality.
- The Ministry of Health is developing a legal document that establishes a Committee for Older People's Issues, in which membership of AAGG is assured.
- An alliance with the media will continue, and provides a good basis for further collaboration, although the events will be more spontaneous and AAGG will need to take the lead.
- The sound basis for continued networking between NGOs and other agencies has been created.

### Bosnia and Herzegovina

- Older people have learnt to speak up on their own behalf, and this will continue (empowerment).
- The Counselling Centre will continue, since it is not a one-off project.
- Outreach activities by older volunteers will continue.
- Networking with other NGOs will continue.
- This project helped other NGOs to start thinking in a different way, e.g., that long-term effects that can be achieved through influencing different policies. This momentum should not be lost.
- Learning from the project in relation to self-help groups will continue (we will find funding from elsewhere).
- Partnerships between Osmijeh and government health services have been established and will continue (e.g. setting up a day centre).

### Croatia

- Work to influence public action will continue, but the organisation will need to find new donors to hold public lectures, exhibitions, etc.
- Groups of volunteers will continue to work with older people, but enlisting new volunteers will not happen without additional funds to provide training for new volunteers.
- The database of other NGOs and about beneficiaries will be expanded.
- The organisation will continue to improve its activities in rural areas regarding access to services (giving information) but this will depend on funds.
- Education of other NGOs will not continue (i.e. no more workshops, national meetings) without additional funds.

### Serbia and Montenegro

- Lastavica will continue with self-help groups, but on a less systematic basis.
- Lastavica will continue with the database without additional funds.
- Lastavica and Viktorija together will continue with the network of NGOs.
- Connections with the ministries and other agencies will continue to build - it would be easier if we had funds for this, but the advocacy will continue.
- Viktorija will continue with self-help groups, home visiting and visits to the collective centre.
- Self-help activities will be less frequent/formal due to inability to pay staff to focus on this.
- There will be no more Round Tables without further funding.



## Conclusion

From the feedback and evaluations of older people and partner representatives on the project, it is clear that project tools enabled older people and their organisations to build their capacity to work effectively with disadvantaged older people, collecting evidence from their local self-help activities to tackle discrimination and prejudice towards older people at a local level. Older people reported a significant change in the way they were treated by the communities where they were active, and an increase in their self-confidence to tackle together, many of the hardships and injustices they face on a daily basis. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, this has enabled older volunteers to begin to play a significant role in the resolution of community-wide problems. In Croatia, local government representatives who were already supportive of older people's issues deepened their commitment to working with older people's issues on the project and committed further resources to the project partner organisation's work with older people.

In Albania and Serbia and Montenegro, major developments took place in scaling advocacy up to a national level through the mobilisation of effective networks of NGOs, government and media. In Albania, according to older people on the project, this resulted in the real increase of pensions for groups of older people, concrete steps to address policy gaps in provision of appropriate services for older people and the development of mechanisms for government, civil society and older people themselves to monitor effective policy and practice for older people. In Serbia, support to the existing Elderly Advocacy Network enabled NGOs to work together to lobby the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Affairs to seek technical assistance from the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs in its implementation of its commitments under the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and to progress the development of a national plan on ageing in collaboration with Government.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia where the impact of national-level action may be less evident at the time of writing, NGOs, Civil Society Organisations and government nevertheless reported an increase in dialogue and effective networking on older people's issues. As partner organisations noted during their evaluation in Split in May 2005, it may simply be too soon for many of these changes to manifest themselves.

At regional level, all the partner organisation and older people's representatives participating in the Split regional meeting in May 2005 felt that regional co-operation not only enabled them to share valuable experience, but in some cases, had potential to facilitate greater tolerance and understanding in this often troubled region. As one older participant remarked, *'Across the four countries older people share similar problems... We learn from each other, from best practices, and implement in our own countries'*.

Based on learning and observations of older people and partner organisations participating in the implementation of this project, section 'Recommendations' draws out recommendations for NGOs, communities, governments and international institutions both to address the situation of disadvantaged older people, and to make use of their enormous potential for the benefit of their communities and countries.

## Recommendations

The recommendations which follow are based on the operational experience in implementing the CARDS Programme, 'Strengthening civil society by promoting the participation of older citizens', particularly the outcomes of consultations with older people, civil society organisations and government, and lessons learned in implementing local activities. These recommendations are directed at community leaders, NGOs, other civil society groups, local, regional and national level government decision makers and relevant international agencies whom older people and NGO project participants identified as being in a position to influence the position of older people and the achievement of their rights in the project countries. Reference is also made to recommendations related to socio-economic discrimination, access to services and discrimination in the community and family which are highlighted in the tables reflecting consultations with older people, and with NGOs and other stakeholders, in section 'Older people and civil society in the four project countries'.

### **Recommendations for Communities**

The recommendations for communities are targeted mainly at community leaders:

#### **Utilising Human Resources**

- Plan for older people to participate in the resolution of community wide problems and harness the extensive skills and experience of older people.

#### **Intergenerational Solidarity**

- Promote community-level and school activities aimed at increasing the awareness amongst children and young people of the contributions older people make to society.

### **Recommendations for NGOs and other Civil Society Groups**

#### **Consultative Processes and Participatory Approaches**

- Consult, engage and involve older people in every stage of community development and empowerment projects through the use of participatory methods.
- Select and train effective facilitators in the use of participatory methods that are sensitive to the particular needs and constraints of older participants.
- Create an enabling environment when consulting with older people. Be conscious of the venue, physical access, language, length, frequency and continuity of meetings.
- Focus consultation meetings on wider issues such as government policies impacting on older people, networking, empowering older people, relevant international developments.
- Consider how NGOs or Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) can continue to empower older people to participate in and contribute to decisions that affect their rights and well being, even if this is not specifically an activity or a specific project or area of work.
- Ensure that NGOs/CSOs are able to demonstrate concrete actions and results so that older people remain motivated to participate.
- Consider how NGOs or CSOs can co-ordinate activities with other NGOs and civil society groups, local and national government and the media. Experience throughout the region shows that when NGOs and CSOs working with older people come together in a network, their capacity for sharing information and best practice, and for influencing the rights and well-being of older people through joint advocacy, are enhanced.

### **Development and Sustainability of Self-Help Groups involving Older People**

- Plan sufficient time and support for self-help groups to become sustainable.
- Plan sufficient support to helping older people to organise so that projects can utilise older people's enormous capabilities.

### **Recommendations for Government**

#### **Collaboration with Civil Society in Addressing the Rights and Basic Needs of Vulnerable Older People**

National, regional and local level governments should:

- Collaborate closely with NGOs and other civil society groups that are involved in addressing the needs of vulnerable older people including linking with self-help groups to enhance services to vulnerable older people.
- Allocate funds for addressing the needs of vulnerable older people on a regular, annual basis.
- Provide funds to NGOs and Civil Society Organisations to address the needs of vulnerable older people, either on a grant or service contract basis.
- Offer tax exemptions for NGO income generating activities and tax breaks for private sector donations which are used for activities targeting vulnerable older people.

#### **International Framework Agreements and Development Strategies**

National governments should collaborate closely with networks of NGOs and CSOs in fulfilling their commitments to international framework agreements and development strategies they have signed and adopted. National governments should:

#### ***UN Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002 and the UN European Commission for Europe Regional Implementation Strategy 2002***

- Honour their commitments to actively implement the Regional Implementation Strategy of the UN Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002 in the UN European Commission for Europe region, which they adopted at the UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing held in Berlin, Germany 11-13 September 2002.
- Prioritise the development and implementation of a **National Plan on Ageing** in complying with the Berlin UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy.

#### ***European Social Charter of the Council of Europe***

- Adhere to and vigorously implement the **European Social Charter** with particular emphasis on Article 23 - The Right of Elderly Persons to Social Protection, and
- **Council of Europe Recommendations** which address issues related to vulnerable older people. such as Recommendation 136 (2003) on the consequences of demographic change for Europe's regions which recommends that '...member states of the Council of Europe to keep the issue of ageing population high on the agenda in order to develop a policy on demographic developments...'

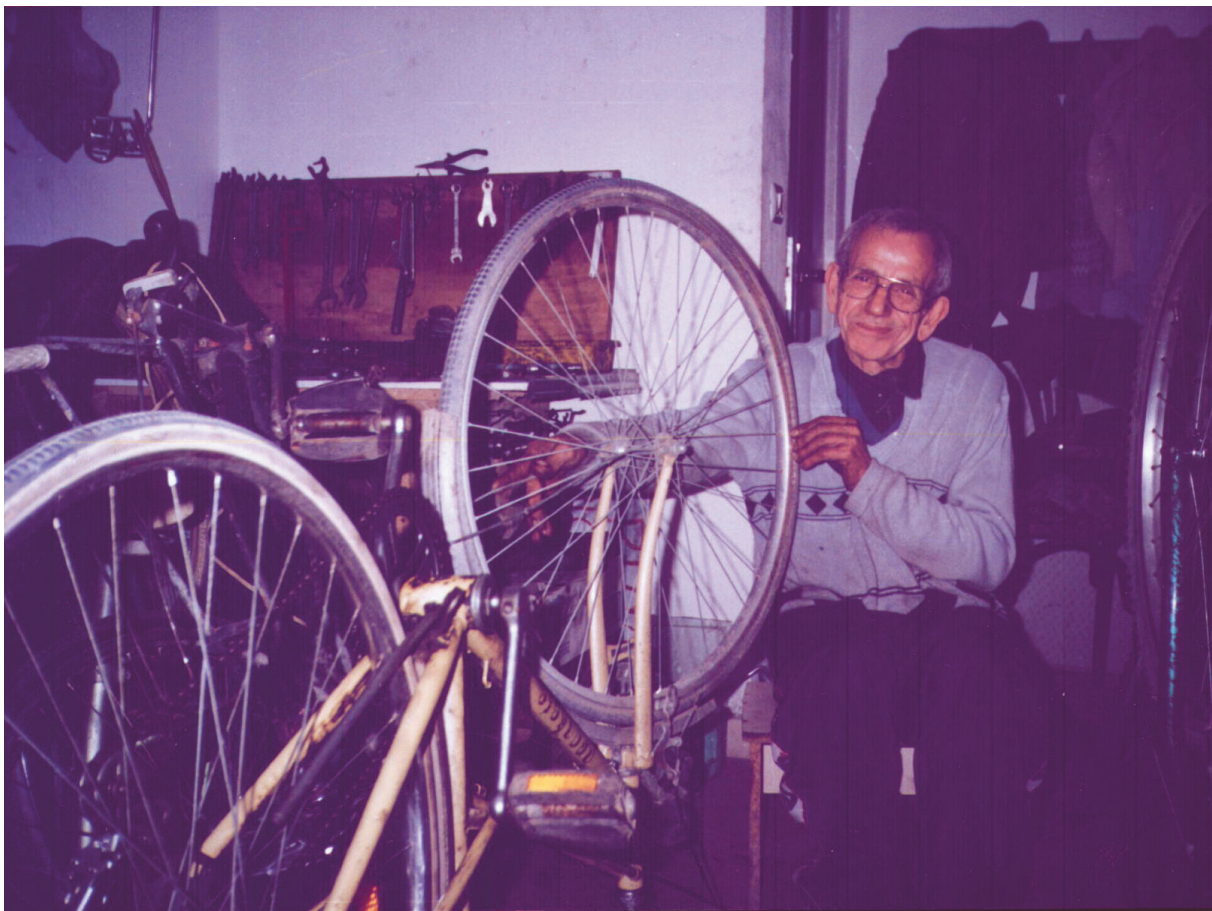
#### ***National Poverty Reduction Strategies***

- Prioritise strategies in their National Poverty Reduction Plan addressed to alleviate poverty amongst vulnerable older people.

### **Recommendations for International Institutions and Donor Agencies**

The recommendations for international institutions and donor agencies are mainly concerned with supporting the efforts of NGOs and CSOs to effectively coordinate their activities as networks, and to be able to better access and collaborate with government authorities at local, regional and national levels:

- Donors should allocate resources to enable NGOs to coordinate their activities as networks, including in collaboration with government institutions.
- There should be more support provided to NGOs and Civil Society Organisations to access government for purposes of collaboration and coordination, e.g., organising workshops to develop joint action plans, sharing data, monitoring and evaluation, etc.
- Regional meetings are an essential project component which should receive donor support, as project partners are able to:
  - Learn from each other - *'Sharing information is priceless'*
  - Recognise similar problems
  - Increase their capacity and skills through training and dissemination of regional best practice.



Staying active and helping other people staying mobile,  
AAGG Albania

## Consultation meetings with older people and NGOs

The average number of older people who attended the consultation meetings was 15-20, while for the NGO consultation and network meetings the average number of NGOs represented was 10-15.

### Albania

27/28 April 2004 - Tirana

28/29 January 2005 - Tirana

### Bosnia and Herzegovina

14/15 May 2004 - Gračanica

18/19 March 2005 - Gračanica

### Croatia

16/17 June 2004 - Split

3/4 March 2005 - Split

### Serbia and Montenegro

19/20 May 2004 - Belgrade

15 February 2005 - Kragujevac

16 February 2005 - Belgrade

## Exchange visits

25/26 December 2004 - representatives of Osmijeh (Bosnia and Herzegovina) visited Lastavica and Viktorija (Belgrade and Kragujevac, Serbia and Montenegro)

27/28 April 2005 - representatives of Lastavica and Viktorija (Serbia and Montenegro) visited Osmijeh (Gračanica, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

17/20 May 2005 - representatives of Lastavica and Viktorija (Serbia and Montenegro) visited Udruga MI (Split, Croatia)

24/25 June 2005 - representatives of AAGG (Albania) visited Lastavica (Serbia and Montenegro)

## Regional meetings

8/11 July 2004 - Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro

19/21 November 2004 - Tirana, Albania

20/22 May 2005 - Split, Croatia



Representatives from partner organisations evaluating the programme  
June 2005, Split regional meeting

## Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and Berlin Ministerial Declaration: *A Society for All Ages in the UNECE Region* and Regional Implementation Strategy in the UNECE Region

### Second World Assembly on Ageing 2002 Madrid. Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in brief<sup>1</sup>

*'Twenty years have passed since our predecessors to adopt the first global document to guide policies on ageing. Since then, the world has changed almost beyond recognition. What has not changed is our fundamental objective: building a society fit for all people of all ages. Today, we have vital and pressing reasons to revisit the issue. The world is undergoing an unprecedented demographic transformation. Between now and 2050, the number of older persons will rise from about 600 million to almost two billion. In less than 50 years from now-for the first time in history-the world will contain more people over 60 than under 15.'*

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan addressing the Second World Assembly on Ageing, Madrid, Spain, April 2002.

The remarkable demographic transition under way will result in the old and the young representing an equal share of the world's population by mid-century.

Though developed countries have been able to age gradually, they face challenges resulting from the relationship between ageing and unemployment and sustainability of pension systems, while developing countries face the challenge of simultaneous development and population ageing.

#### Ageing in numbers: the global situation

- Globally, the proportion of persons aged 60 years and older is expected to double between 2000 and 2050, from 10 to 21 per cent, whereas the proportion of children is projected to drop by third, from 30 to 21 per cent.
- In developing countries, the proportion of older persons is expected to rise from 8 to 19 per cent by 2050, while that of children will fall from 33 to 22 per cent.
- In some developed countries and countries with economies in transition, the number of older persons already exceeds the number of children and birth rates have fallen below replacement levels.
- While the overwhelming proportion of older persons in developed countries live in areas classified as urban, the majority of older persons in developing countries live in rural areas today.
- By 2050, 82 per cent of the population of developed countries will live in urban areas, while less than half of population of developing countries will live there.
- Older women outnumber older men, increasingly so with age.
- Persons 80 years or more numbered 70 million in 2000 and their numbers are projected to increase to more than five times over the next 50 years.

The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing addresses opportunities and challenges of ageing in 11 central themes, three priority directions, 18 areas of concern and 239 recommendations for action. It calls for changes in attitudes, policies and practices at all levels in all sectors so that the enormous potential of ageing in the twenty-first century may be fulfilled.

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. 2002. Division for Social Policy and Development. UN Programme on Ageing. *Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in brief*. 2002. United Nations. New York.

## An Assembly and an International Plan to build a society for all ages: the response

At the Second World Assembly on Ageing, held in Madrid in 2002, representatives of 159 countries adopted a comprehensive International Plan of Action on Ageing and Political Declaration. The new Plan of Action identifies three main priority directions and defines a set of objectives and actions to be taken by Governments, the international community and civil society. It lays new ground in response to the challenges and opportunities of ageing in the twenty-first century.

Member States adopted the outcome documents, committing themselves to pursue policies that aim towards the participation of older persons in their societies as citizens with full rights, and the assurance that persons everywhere are able to age with security and dignity. For the first time, Governments agreed on the need to link ageing to other frameworks for social and economic development and human rights, recognizing that ageing will be the dominant and most visible aspect of world population in the twenty-first century. Governments decided that the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development, is essential for the creation of an inclusive society for all ages.

The Plan presents 11 central themes that are linked to goals, objectives and commitments from major United Nations conferences and summits, including the Millennium Declaration. These themes are critical to building appropriate policies and programmes associated with individual and population ageing. They include:

- The full realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms of all older persons;
- The achievement of secure ageing, which involves reaffirming the goal of eradicating poverty in old age and building on the United Nations Principles for Older Persons;
- Empowerment of older persons to fully and effectively participate in the economic, political and social lives of their societies, including through income-generating and voluntary work;
- Provision of opportunities for individual development, self-fulfilment and well being throughout life as well as in late life, through, for example, access to lifelong learning and participation in the community while recognizing that older persons are not one homogeneous group;
- Ensuring the full enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, and civil and political rights of persons, and the elimination of all forms of violence and discrimination against older persons;
- Commitment to gender equality among older persons through, inter alia, elimination of gender-based discrimination;
- Recognition of the crucial importance of families, intergenerational interdependence, solidarity and reciprocity for social development;
- Provision of health care, support and social protection for older persons, including preventive and rehabilitative health care;
- Facilitating partnership between all levels of government, civil society, the private sector and older persons themselves in translating the International Plan of Action into practical action;
- Harnessing of scientific research and expertise and realizing the potential of technology to focus on, inter alia, the individual, social and health implications of ageing, in particular in developing countries;
- Recognition of the situation of ageing indigenous persons, their unique circumstances and the need to seek means to give them an effective voice in decisions directly affecting them.

The Second World Assembly on Ageing agreed on their priority directions for action on ageing in the twenty-first century: older persons and development; advancing health and well-being into old age; and ensuring enabling and supportive environments. In further agreed on 18 areas of concern and established 239 recommendations are summarized over the following pages.

## **Older persons and development**

*Older persons must be full participants in the development process and also share in its benefits.*

### **Active participation in society and development**

- Provide opportunities, programmes and support to encourage older persons to participate or continue to participate in cultural, economic, political, social life and lifelong learning.
- Ensure the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by promoting the implementation of human rights conventions and other human rights instruments, particularly in combating all forms of discrimination.

### **Work and the ageing labour force**

- Take action to increase participation in the labour market of the working-age population and to reduce the risk of exclusion or dependency in later life.
- Promote self-employment initiatives for micro enterprise development and ensuring access to credit, without discrimination, in particular gender discrimination.

### **Rural development, migration and urbanization**

- Strengthen the capacity of ageing farmers through continued access to financial and infrastructure services and training for improved farming techniques and technologies.
- Ensure that the rights of older women in rural and remote areas are taken into account with regard to their equal access to and control of economic resources.
- Develop policies and programmes that facilitate the integration of older migrants into the social, cultural, political and economic life of countries of destination and encourage respect for them.

### **Access to knowledge, education and training**

- Achieve a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.
- Implement policies that promote access to training and retraining for older workers and encourage them to continue to use their acquired knowledge and skills after retirement.

### **Intergenerational solidarity**

- Develop initiatives aimed at promoting mutual, productive exchange between generations, focusing on older persons as societal resource.
- Initiate research on the advantages and disadvantages of different living arrangements for older persons, including familial co-residence and independent living in different cultures and settings.

### **Eradication of poverty**

- Ensure that the particular needs of older women, the oldest old, older persons with disabilities and those living alone are specifically addressed in poverty eradication strategies and implementation programmes.

### **Income security, social protection/social security and poverty prevention**

- Urgently organize social protection-social security systems to ensure minimum income for older persons with no other means of support, most whom are women and those living alone and tend to be more vulnerable to poverty.



- Invite international financial institutions to assist developing countries and all countries in need in their efforts to achieve basic social protection for older persons.

### Emergency situations

- Take concrete measures to protect and assist older persons in situations of armed conflict and foreign occupation, including through the provision of physical and mental rehabilitation services.
- Recognize that older refugees of different cultural backgrounds growing old in new and unfamiliar surroundings are often in special need of social networks and extra support, and aim to ensure access to such services.
- Share and apply lessons learned from practices that have successfully utilized the contributions of older persons in the aftermath of emergencies.

### Advancing health and well-being into old age

*The full benefits of health longevity have yet to be shared by all humanity, evidence by the fact that entire countries, especially developing countries and certain population groups, still experience high rates of morbidity and mortality at all ages.*

### Health promotion and well-being throughout life

- Set targets, in particular gender-specific targets, to improve the health status of older persons and reduce disability and mortality.
- Encourage older persons to maintain or adopt an active and healthy lifestyle, and pay attention to the danger arising from the consequences of social isolation.
- Pay particular attention to nutritional deficiency and associated diseases in the design and implementation of health promotion and prevention programmes for older persons.

### Universal and equal access to health-care services

- Take measures to ensure equal distribution of health and rehabilitation to older persons and increase access for these resources for older persons who are poor, and promote their distribution to rural and remote areas.
- Promote the establishment and coordination of a full range of services in the continuum of care, including, inter alia, prevention and promotion, primary care, acute care, rehabilitation, and long-term and palliative care<sup>2</sup>.
- Encourage health-care and social care providers to fully include older persons in decision-making related to their own care.

### Older persons and HIV/AIDS

- Ensure that AIDS treatment and support strategies recognize the needs of older persons who are infected by HIV/AIDS.
- Review the economic impact of HIV/AIDS on older persons, particularly in their role as caregivers, as agreed in Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS.

### Training of care providers and health professionals

- Initiate and promote education and training programmes for health professionals, social care professionals and informal care providers in the services for and care of older persons, including in gerontology and geriatrics, and support all countries in these efforts, particularly developing countries.

### Mental health needs of older persons

- Develop and implement national and local strategies designed to improve prevention, timely detection and treatment of mental illness in old age, including the training of health-care professionals.
- Support self-help programmes and provide respite care for patients, families and other carers.

<sup>2</sup> Palliative care's definition based on WHO is active total care of patients whose disease is not responsive to curative treatment, by name-ly controlling pain and other symptoms of disease and offering psychological, social and spiritual support to patients and their families.

### **Older persons and disabilities**

- Develop gender and age-sensitive national and local policies, legislation, plans and programmes for the treatment and prevention of disabilities.
- Encourage the development of housing options for older persons with disabilities that reduce barriers and encourage independence; and make public and commercial spaces, transportation and other services accessible to older persons with disabilities.
- Promote, in accordance with applicable international law, the accessibility and affordability of pharmaceuticals and medical technologies to all without discrimination.

### **Ensuring enabling and supportive environments**

*Policies are required that empower older persons and support their contribution to society. This includes access to basic services such as clean water and adequate food. It also requires policies that simultaneously strengthen both lifelong development and independence that support social institutions based on principles of reciprocity and interdependence.*

### **Housing and the living environment**

- Link affordable housing with social support services to ensure the integration of living arrangements, long-term care and opportunities for social interaction.
- Facilitate the growth of both public and private alternative forms of transport in urban areas, such as neighbourhood-based businesses and services.

### **Care, and support for caregivers**

- Increase quality of care and access to community-based long-term care for older persons living alone in order to extend their capacity for independent living as a possible alternative to hospitalization and nursing-home placement.
- Facilitate comparative research into care systems in different cultures and settings.
- Identify how to assist older persons, particularly older women, in care giving, and address their specific social, economic and psychological needs.

### **Neglect, abuse and violence**

- Sensitize professionals and educate the general public, using media and other awareness-raising campaigns, on the subject of abuse and its various characteristics and causes.
- Abolish widowhood rites that are harmful to the health and well-being of women.
- Encourage further research into the causes, nature, extent, seriousness and consequences of all forms of violence against older women and men, and widely disseminate findings of research and studies.

### **Images of ageing**

- Encourage the mass media to promote images that highlight the wisdom, strengths, contributions, courage and resourcefulness of older women and men, including older persons with disabilities.
- Encourage educators to recognize and include in their courses the contribution made by persons of all ages, including older persons.
- Recognize that the media are harbingers of change and can be guiding factors in fostering the role of older persons in development strategies, including in rural areas.

## **Towards implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action**

Governments have primary responsibility for implementing the broad recommendations of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. Enhanced and focused international cooperation and an effective commitment by developed countries and international development agencies will enhance and enable the implementation of the Plan. It is similarly important that United Nations funds and programmes ensure integration of ageing in their programmes and projects, including at the country level.

Priorities for international cooperation on ageing include promotion of training and capacity-building on ageing in developing countries; exchange of experiences and best practices, researchers and research findings and data collection to support policy and programme development as appropriate; establishment of income-generating projects; and information dissemination.

## **Berlin Ministerial Declaration: *A Society for All Ages in the UNECE Region and Regional Implementation Strategy in the UNECE Region***

### **Background**

On 13 September 2002, during its concluding session, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Regional Ministerial Conference on Ageing, organized in cooperation with the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth of Germany, adopted two documents: The Berlin Ministerial Declaration – *A Society for All Ages in the UNECE Region*, and the Regional Implementation Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002.

The governments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro were present at both the Madrid UN Second World Assembly on Ageing and the Berlin UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing. In adopting the Regional Implementation Strategy of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002 in the UNECE region, the respective government representatives committed their governments to implement the strategy. A recommended action was the development of a national plan of action on ageing. To date the governments of Albania, Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro have commenced this process.

### **Berlin Ministerial Declaration: *A Society for All Ages in the Unece Region*<sup>3</sup>**

1. We, the representatives of the member states of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, gathered at the UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing in Berlin from 11 to 13 September 2002, adopt the Regional Implementation Strategy of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002 in the UNECE region and commit our governments to implement this comprehensive strategy.
2. We recognise that the UNECE region is experiencing unprecedented demographic changes and has the highest proportion of older persons. These changes are the result of a profound socio-economic transformation. They pose multiple challenges and provide numerous opportunities for our societies. We have a responsibility, in collaboration with all relevant actors of civil society and the private sector, to seize these opportunities and fully respond to these challenges.
3. We welcome the continual growth in longevity as an important achievement of our societies. Older persons are a valuable resource and make an essential contribution to society. We emphasise the importance of enabling older persons to continue to participate fully in all aspects of life. Our approach to ageing is all-inclusive, promoting the development of a society for all ages through the strengthening of intergenerational and intragenerational solidarity. Young generations have responsibilities and a special role in building a society for all ages.
4. We are aware that promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms are essential for the active participation of older persons in all aspects in life and for the creation of a society for all ages. We commit ourselves to ensure the full enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, and civil and political rights of persons and the elimination of all forms of violence, abuse and neglect, and of discrimination against older persons. In this connec-

<sup>3</sup> UN Economic Commission for Europe. UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing. Berlin (Germany), 11-13 September 2002. Berlin Ministerial Declaration: *A Society for All Ages in the UNECE Region*. ECE/AC.23/2002/3Rev.2. United Nations. Geneva.

tion, groups with special needs, irrespective of the age of their members, including the poor, socially excluded and those with disabilities, are of particular concern to us. We are determined to enable all persons to reach old age in better health and well-being, with particular attention to the situation of older women, and to enhance the recognition of the dignity and independence of older persons.

5. We are cognisant of the economic and social consequences of the long-term nature of demographic changes. To be successful, responses to these changes should be sustainable. Moreover, the responses should be based on a holistic approach, so that ageing is mainstreamed in all policy fields. Policies for different sectors, systems and groups should be comprehensive, properly co-ordinated, and mutually supportive and gender sensitive. The challenge is for society as a whole to adapt to demographic changes, in particular ageing.
6. We are aware that our increasingly integrated region consists of societies at vastly different levels of economic and social development and that a number of countries with economies in transition are less equipped to face the challenges of population ageing. Thus assistance to these countries should be enhanced.
7. We affirm that our societies share common values, including those pertaining to human rights, fundamental freedoms and elimination of all forms of discrimination. We also recognise the existence of substantial variations among UNECE member states in economic, social, political, and cultural fields. The Regional Implementation Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002 is sensitive to these differences.
8. In adopting the Regional Implementation Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002, and in pursuance of mainstreaming ageing into all policy fields, we give particular priority to: expanding participation of older persons in society and fostering social inclusion and independent living; promoting equitable and sustainable economic growth in addressing the implications of population ageing; strengthening adequate and sustainable social protection for present and future generations; encouraging labour markets to respond to ageing and take advantage of the potential of older persons; promoting life-long learning; enhancing life-long physical and mental health and well-being; ensuring equal access to high quality health and social care; mainstreaming a gender perspective in all ageing policies; supporting older persons, their families, and communities in their care-giving roles; and promoting intergenerational solidarity.
9. We commit ourselves to implement the Regional Implementation Strategy of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002 at all levels, from local to national. We reiterate that we have the primary responsibility to pursue this objective, working in close co-operation with civil society, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders, particularly older persons themselves. Their contribution to the development of effective policy responses is vital.
10. We resolve to promote and take part in co-operation among the UNECE member states in implementing the Regional Implementation Strategy. Such co-operation could be further enhanced by active collaboration among relevant United Nations departments and agencies and other intergovernmental organisations and institutions active in the field of ageing in the UNECE region as well as NGO networks. We consider that co-operation within the region should be fully in line with commitments made at the Second World Assembly on Ageing regarding all dimensions of international co-operation.
11. We stress the importance of an effective follow-up to the implementation of the Regional Implementation Strategy that should allow for a productive exchange of information, experience and best practices. This process would benefit as much as possible from adequate collaboration and active participation of relevant organisations of the region.
12. We are convinced that putting into effect the Regional Implementation Strategy is the best way of implementing the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002 in the UNECE region and, therefore, we will spare no effort at achieving this objective.

## Regional Implementation Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002 in the UNECE Region

The Regional Implementation Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002 in the UN Economic Commission for Europe Region consisted of 10 commitments. The **COMMITMENTS** were the following:

- To mainstream ageing in all policy fields with the aim of bringing societies and economies into harmony with demographic change to achieve a society for all ages;
- To ensure full integration and participation of older persons in society;
- To promote equitable and sustainable economic growth in response to population ageing;
- To adjust social protection systems in response to demographic changes and their social and economic consequences;
- To enable labour markets to respond to the economic and social consequences of population ageing;
- To promote life-long learning and adapt the educational system in order to meet the changing economic, social and demographic conditions;
- To strive to ensure quality of life at all ages and maintain independent living including health and well-being;
- To mainstream a gender approach in an ageing society;
- To support families that provide care for older persons and promote intergenerational and intra-generational solidarity among their members;
- To promote the implementation and follow-up of the regional implementation strategy through regional cooperation.

These Commitments are fully described in the document, *Regional Implementation Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002*, UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing. Berlin (Germany), 11-13 September 2002. ECE/AC.23/2002/3Rev.6. United Nations. Geneva.

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HelpAge International is a global network of not-for-profit organisations with a mission to work with and for disadvantaged older people worldwide to achieve a lasting improvement in quality of their lives.



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