



AFE^{CO}

EMPOWERING OLDER ADULTS TO APPLY AFFORDABLE
ECO- AND AGE-FRIENDLY SOLUTIONS TO AGE IN PLACE

AFECO – National report of Greece

A1 literature review /A2 comparative analysis of barriers and facilitators
/A3 good practices



WROCLAW UNIVERSITY
OF ENVIRONMENTAL
AND LIFE SCIENCES



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About this publication

This report summarises the results of the research activities carried out in Greece within the Erasmus+ project AFECO – Empowering older adults to apply affordable eco- and age-friendly solutions to age in place (cooperation partnership in adult education, project number: 2022-1-NL01-KA220-ADU-000086242). More information is available at <https://afeco.eu/>.

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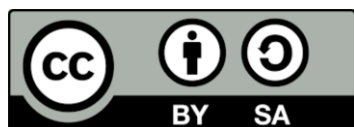
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Definitions

Definition of age-friendly principles

Any practical solutions linked to one or more of the eight domains of the age-friendly cities framework that older adults themselves or with support of others can implement in their own home or community. Any practical solutions linked to one or more of the eight domains of the age-friendly cities framework that in AFECO older adults can implement themselves or with the support of others in their own home or community. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2007, 2016, 2023) developed the age-friendly cities framework to encourage and support active and healthy living by enhancing opportunities for health, participation and security to improve the quality of life of the ageing population. The eight domains of the framework are as follows: outdoor spaces and buildings; transportation; housing; social participation; respect and social inclusion; civic participation and employment; communication and information; and community support and health services.

According to (Menec et al, 2017), Age-friendly principles “(...) support and enable people to age actively (...) with the notion of “active aging” broadly defined in terms of health, participation, and security.”

Definition of eco-friendly principles

Any practical solution that older adults themselves or with the support of others can implement in their own home or community to act more sustainable or environmentally friendly. Environmentally friendly means that the practical solutions should aim to reduce, minimise the impact on, or do no harm to ecosystems or the environment (Webster).

According to Ragheb et. al (2016), a building to be considered “green” or “eco-friendly” needs to have:

- Ventilation systems designed for efficient heating and cooling
- Energy-efficient lightning and appliances
- Adaptive reuse of older buildings
- Water-saving plumbing fixtures
- Landscapes planned to maximize passive solar energy
- Minimal harm to the natural habitat
- Alternate power sources such as solar power or wind power
- Non-synthetic, non-toxic materials
- Locally-obtained woods and stone
- Responsibly-harvested woods
- Use of recycled architectural salvage
- Efficient use of space

Introduction

The aim of this report is to give an overview of current state of the art in the occurrence and policies regarding affordable age-friendly and eco-friendly solutions in the partner countries. The report consists of the findings from the literature review, the comparative analysis and the reporting of good practices. It aims for the consortium as a whole to gain an understanding of the state of the art and on affordable age and eco-friendly solutions in partner countries and particularly the home and community fields, and to present that knowledge in the form of a written report.

The literature review, the analysis of barriers and facilitators, and the survey on existing or even planning good practices in the project countries, will help the partners to build and update a strong knowledge base in these fields. To be closer to the practical issues that define the adaptability of eco and age-friendly solutions in the community, the consortium decided to use mostly grey literature and websites for tools and advice, such as governmental pages. Common grey literature publication types include reports (annual, research, technical, project, etc.), working papers, government documents, white papers and evaluations, which will help all partners to reach conclusions around the common field between age and eco-friendly developments.

Barriers and facilitators found in each project country will be used for stipulating the right consequence of actions needed to propose a sound methodology that could – in combination with other actions and stakeholders – promote the implementation of age and eco-friendly principles into the public and private sphere of care for older people.

Finally, the selection of good representative practices by each project country can be the basis for a report, and a publication, that depicts the level of maturity and progress of the notions of age-friendliness and eco-friendliness, as well as their impact on the care of older people.

Results for Greece

Greece has the highest share of the population aged 65+ among EU member states and conversely, the lowest share of spending on long-term care as a percentage of overall health spending. Recent figures show that Greece allocated less than 0.2% of GDP of total spending to long-term care; far below the EU average of 1.5%, leading to limited services. In 2020, for example, for every 100,000 inhabitants, there was less than 1 long-term care bed in nursing and residential care facilities, ranking Greece as the lowest among EU member states (OECD, 2020).

In the period 2019-2050, the share of people aged 65+ in the Greek population is expected to grow from 22% to 33.8% (EU-28: 20%-28.5%), with most of the growth happening before 2032. At the same time, the share of people 85+ will more than double from 3.3% to 7% (EU-28: 2.7%-6.1%).

Life expectancy for men and women at age 65 is projected to rise from 18.6/21.4 years (EU-28: 18.1/21.4) in 2017 to 22.6/24.6 years (EU-28: 22.4/25.6) in 2060.

Today, 84 years is the average life expectancy for women and 79 years for men. 69% of people 65+ suffer from chronic illnesses (ELSTAT, 2020). 74% of older people are affected by mobility problems.

The field of long-term care in Greece is characterised by many things problems because it lags in services that contribute to uniform and universal coverage of long-term care. It has one mixed system of services concerning formal and informal care. The state contribution is insufficient and has a key role in the family's long-term care. According to Eurofound, the European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS – 2017) provides a relatively better overview on informal care. According to EQLS, Greece comes first among European countries in the share of people providing weekly informal care. This share amounts to 34% of the total population, while Belgium and Malta follow closely with 30% and 26%, respectively. Countries like Austria, the Czech Republic and Romania come last in the share of people providing informal care but still with a non-negligible share of around 10%. The significance of informal caregiving in Greece is also shown by its share doubling the European average (17%).

Informal caregiving also exhibits a gender dimension, as mostly women provide informal care. On average, 58.8% of the Europeans providing informal care are female. Greece ranks 4th among European countries in the share of female informal caregivers, accounting for 63.5%. As a result, women shoulder the burden of informal care.

Greece has implemented various programs aimed at better living for older people in the context of their protection of them. The directorate of the social solidarity of each regional authority is responsible for the implementation of such programs.

The most important program implemented in Greece regarding older people, which are trying to cover some of their basic needs, are the following:

- A) Allowance for uninsured older people with chronic illness and disability of 67% and above is provided by the Department of Social Insurance and Control.
- B) A rental allowance is also granted to uninsured, financially insecure, single people from the same service.
- C) O.G.A. grants basic old-age pension to all uninsured people aged 67 and over who have not secured a pension from any insurance fund and are financially weak.

In Greece, open-ended care services for seniors are provided by the Open Older people Care centers (KAPI), the Older People Day Care Centers (K.I.F.I) and the "Home Assistance Program".

Home ownership

According to the official data of Eurostat and the published survey of the organisation Housing Europe (European Federation of Public, Cooperative & Social Housing), in the year 2019, the ownership rate in our country was 75.4% (2,978,224 dwellings), either these are properties with a mortgage or loan, or properties that do not have a mortgage or loan outstanding.

In 2020, our country was ranked 19th among 33 countries in Europe, losing the 17th place it held in 2019. In particular, in 2020 the percentage of home ownership fluctuated at 73.9% and in 2021 at 73.3%. That is, Greece lost 2.1 percentage points in the period 2019-2021. This, in absolute numbers, corresponds to approximately 82,947 dwellings.

Population distribution

According to 2021 data, 45% of the total population lives in urban areas, a percentage 5 points higher than the European average (40%). The remaining 31% live in rural areas and 24% in areas classified as semi-urban. The highest percentages of people living in urban areas are observed in the Netherlands (74%), Spain (64%) and Belgium (54%), and the lowest in Hungary (18%), Slovakia (12%) and Romania (12%).

Age-friendly principles in Greece

The implementation of age-friendly and eco-friendly principles in physical environments, such as homes and communities, should be an important issue in Greece. These principles are essential for creating sustainable and healthy environments that promote the well-being of all residents, particularly older adults. Certainly, there are several cultural, social, and economic factors to consider when exploring the implementation, the trends and patterns of eco and age-friendly principles in Greece.

Greece has a rich cultural heritage and a strong connection to the Mediterranean region which may influence its approach to sustainability, including a focus on the use of natural resources. In addition, Greece has an increased older population which certainly plays a key role for demanding more age-friendly environments and technologies.

Even though the recourses on this topic are limited regarding Greece, several surveys have been conducted to understand the attitudes of Greek people towards age and eco-friendly environments. For example, a survey conducted by the Hellenic Society for Gerontology and Geriatrics found that many older adults in Greece were concerned about environmental issues, particularly the effects of climate change. The survey also found that many older adults were interested in implementing eco-friendly practices in their homes.

However, implementing these principles can be challenging due to various practical issues. In terms of age-friendly principles, some common challenges include adapting the physical environment to meet the needs of older adults, promoting social inclusion and connectivity, and ensuring access to health and support services. Eco-friendly principles may involve reducing carbon footprint, minimising waste, and conserving natural resources.

Despite the interest in eco-friendly and age-friendly principles, several practical issues may impede implementation. These include cost, infrastructure, awareness, education, policy and regulation, and the digital divide. For example, many eco-friendly and age-friendly technologies can be expensive to purchase and install, which can be a barrier for individuals, families, and communities. Additionally, some areas may not have broadband connectivity to support

telehealth services or smart home technologies. Older adults, caregivers, and the public may also lack awareness and education about the benefits of eco-friendly and age-friendly technologies, making generating support and interest in these technologies more difficult. Furthermore, Greece's regulatory framework may not fully support the implementation of eco-friendly and age-friendly technologies.

1. The **Hellenic Intermunicipal Network of Healthy Cities**, by constitution and by its statutes, among others, has as its purpose the adoption and implementation of WHO policies for Healthy Cities.

One of the main policies of WHO concerns the Third Age and Healthy Aging, taking into account all the factors affecting older people and their quality of life in a city as well as the actions and programs that the Municipalities could adopt to promote health, equality in health of this age group as well as in shaping more friendly cities towards the Third Age.

The Network reviews these policies and media in detail from the annual reports of the member municipalities and records the actions and Municipal programs aimed at people in the third age.

The common finding is that while there are programs and actions concerning mainly health and social policy for people in the third age, even in large municipalities there is no single policy for the Third Age.

To cover this lack, the Network created a Group of professionals in the field through the Municipalities themselves to study the policy of the WHO and the European Union and to proceed to one overall proposal for people of the 3rd Age, adapted to the data and the possibilities of Greek municipalities.

Eco-friendly principles in Greece

In Greece the "Saving money" program, based on the criteria of annual energy savings, as well as the individual or family income, consists of providing incentives for interventions to save energy and strengthen energy autonomy in the context of the transition to a "Smart Home", and aims to:

- reducing the energy needs of buildings and pollutant emissions that contribute to the worsening of the greenhouse effect
- saving costs for citizens, improving daily living conditions and comfort as well as the safety and health of citizens when using these buildings
- achieving a cleaner environment.

The estimated annual energy savings, based on the proposed cost of interventions (at a rate of 50%) and the individual or family income (at a rate of 15%) has been defined as one of the main criteria for qualifying applications for funding. For vulnerable households with individual incomes of up to 5,000 euros and with family incomes of up to 10,000 euros, the subsidy amounts to 75%. At the same time, the possibility of interest-free borrowing with a State guarantee for the percentage of the same participation is provided. The average estimated subsidy will generally amount to 62% of the total expenditure.

Age-friendly and eco-friendly principles in Greece

The "Adopt your city" program. The program is implemented for the first time in Athens and is a platform for developing partnerships between the Municipality of Athens and the private initiative. Today, more than 100 private entities, associations and foundations participate in the program, enabling important changes to be made in the city with speed, flexibility and transparency through donations in order to make them more age-friendly.

Analysis

A multi-pronged approach is necessary to address the challenges in implementing age-friendly and eco-friendly principles in physical environments. This includes addressing cost and infrastructure barriers, increasing awareness and education, improving policy and regulation, and addressing the digital divide.

Cost and infrastructure barriers are two key challenges that can impede the implementation of age-friendly and eco-friendly technologies in homes and communities. Many of these technologies require significant investments to purchase and install, which can be prohibitive for many individuals, families, and communities. Additionally, the lack of necessary infrastructure, such as broadband connectivity, can make adopting these technologies difficult.

Awareness and education are critical in promoting the adoption and implementation of age-friendly and eco-friendly technologies. Many older adults, caregivers, and the general public may not be aware of the benefits of these technologies or how to use them. Therefore, educational campaigns and outreach efforts may be necessary to increase awareness and promote adoption.

Policy and regulation can also play a critical role in promoting the adoption of age-friendly and eco-friendly technologies. For example, regulations that incentivise adopting these technologies, such as tax credits or grants, can help reduce the adoption's financial burden. Additionally, policies that mandate these technologies in certain settings, such as healthcare facilities, can help promote adoption and create a more supportive regulatory environment.

Finally, addressing the digital divide is critical to promoting the adoption and use of age-friendly and eco-friendly principles. The digital divide refers to the gap in broadband access and digital literacy that exists between different populations, such as urban and rural areas or older and younger adults. Addressing this divide through initiatives such as broadband expansion and digital literacy programs can help to ensure that all populations have access to and can use these technologies.

Gaps and challenges

In Greece it is obvious the lack of tested and adequately progressed practices that promote age-friendly and eco-friendly principles. This is becoming even more obvious in the case of initiatives that combine those two aspects.

It is also apparent the lack of central administration and coordination of such activities and initiatives either by a dedicated governmental institution or through the cooperation of public and private sector.

Subsequently a roadmap regarding the implementation of relevant actions doesn't exist either.

Cities and communities consist the background upon which the financial, social, spiritual and cultural evolution of human life takes place. Each civic area disposes significant characteristics that inspire its unique identity. The shape and overall formation of the cities and communities needs to be scrutinized under a framework that combines the active ageing policies and directives with the accessibility and the level of spatial and age-friendly design.

In terms of active ageing and age-friendly initiatives, accessibility is of huge importance, as well as the organization of initiatives that highlight the

In terms of spatial design it is needed the application of developmental strategies based on an overall review of the cities, aiming to provide sustainable development, financial numbers, social cohesion and opportunities for participation, enhancing the quality of life of older citizens.

It is needed the configuration of new policy measures applicable to the whole range of local administration sector dealing with:

- A holistic approach in shaping the right strategies and practices for empowering the methodology for healthier cities
- Registering and analyzing the reported problems and complaints from the older beneficiaries
- Registering possible corrective and improving proposals on behalf of older citizens
- Adjusting to the demographic issue that leads to an increased number of older beneficiaries
- Coincide any good practices build to the needs of older people

Needs and requirements of older adults

1. Urban Vegetable Gardens. They exist in many towns throughout Greece, and they offer the opportunity to citizens to assume the initiative to cultivate their vegetables and in parallel to socialize, to be more physical active and to offer to community. At the same time, the view that urban agriculture can upgrade quality of life in cities is being strengthened, being an alternative development strategy aimed at reducing of urban poverty and food insecurity. So, in the effort reconnection of the city man with the natural environment, many urban settlements internationally implement actions to integrate agriculture into everyday life. The actions these, directly linked to the targeting of environmentally sustainable cities in the context of sustainable development. Several actions should be taken care of for the proper function of the vegetable gardens:

- Proper management - soil improvement
- Correct management of water - reduction of consumption

- Space for composting
- Space for protection from the sun and rain
- Tool storage
- Spore for plant propagation

2. "Pocket parks" (internationally called "pocket parks") are green spaces that replace areas that had been abandoned for many years and turned into landfills. They are located in densely built-up neighbourhoods of the city and are the foundations for the creation of cities that exploit and utilize even the last centimeter of public space for the benefit of citizens. It is a practice that has succeeded in many European capitals, and not only, and was adopted to reform the neighborhoods of Athens

Pocket parks have multiple benefits for cities. They are small green touches that change the gray urban landscape, giving breaths of oxygen to residents and visitors. It is also worth noting that they are created with environmentally friendly materials. Beyond their contribution to the protection of the environment with plants, trees, flowers and cooling, their role in dealing with the isolation of the inhabitants of big cities is catalytic. The value multiplies in the period of the pandemic. In other words, they also have a very important social contribution.

To date, five pocket parks have been created in districts of Athens. The response of the citizens is very positive. The residents in these neighbourhoods have "adopted" them, take care of them and enjoy them every day. Besides, the specific parks are created according to the standards of the cities where their existence changed the physiognomy of entire areas but also positively affected the daily life of the residents

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