



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

Manual for Co-creation Sessions



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About this manual

This manual presents the steps for the activities that will be carried out in Work Package 3- Activity 4 (WP3- A4) of 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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1. Introduction

According to The World Health Organization (WHO) [World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, 2016] the involvement and participation of older people in all decisions and processes is the single most important principle to facilitate the creation of age-friendly environments. Older people's experiences should be a starting point for the development of initiatives: "nothing about us without us!". The WHO defined participation as "a process by which people are enabled to become actively and genuinely involved in defining issues of concern to them, in making decisions about factors that affect their lives, in formulating and implementing policies, in planning, developing and delivering services and in taking action to achieve change" (Ibid] (p.11). The participation of people in decision-making processes that are of concern to them can contribute to the legitimacy and democratic basis of the decisions that are being made, and people's knowledge based on their personal experiences can be of value in shaping their environment [Sanoff, 2011; Teunissen & Abma, 2010).

This document will present the methodology for the co-creation sessions with older adults based on the proposal and agreements between partners (WP3). Co-creation is a process where end-users are involved in the design of a service or product. The end-user is acknowledged for their empirical expertise on the given subject. The user is therefore participating in the process as an active co-creator, rather than as a subject of research [Oude Weernink & van Zaalen, 2018].

Two co-creation sessions (April and September 2024) will be conducted in six countries – Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, and the Netherlands with a set of approximately 48 older people in total from diverse backgrounds, each reflecting the older population (demographics) of every country. As we wish to include the least-voiced in our societies, instead of the more prominent and vocal representatives, specific attention will be given to recruiting older people. Local partners will be involved in the recruitment of older people and for providing feedback.

2. Methodology

Two co-creation sessions will be held in Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, and the Netherlands in April 2024 and September 2024. Each country will organise two sessions with about 5-8 older adults. Each session will last for approximately two hours each (with a break).

2.1. Recruitment criteria

We plan to involve 5-8 people in each country to co-create. These people will be selected based on the following set of criteria:

- Age - people over 65 years, representation of different age cohorts: 65-74, 75-84, 85 and more with a mix in gender.
- Having a smartphone, laptop or tablet that connects to the internet (will be a mix of participants who say they are familiar with the use of internet/technological devices, and participants who feel less familiar with the use of internet/technological devices).
- A mix in older adults with a migrant background or not, in reflection of the country's population of older adults (in the Netherlands this will be included).
- Willing to learn and participate.

2.2 Recruitment strategy

In the recruitment process, special attention should be given to highlighting the importance of this project and to the importance of input of older adults themselves in the development process. As the explorative research shows that older adults can find this to be of importance.

Participants can be recruited by an online or print call for participants, through media such as Facebook or local newspapers. Participants can be approached in person, for example, in a community centre, church or supermarket. It's a good idea to ask them to share information about the co-creation sessions with their family, friends and colleagues.

At the same time, information about the co-creation sessions and the invitation to participate should be forwarded to local actors, e.g. centres for seniors, cultural institutions and other important places for local environment where older people spend their free time. The network of project partners can be used. An invitation letter including a brief information about the project will be given if people expressed interest in participating (Appendix 1,2,3 should be translated for each country).

Same participants will be invited for all two sessions

Objective: Create a group of 5-8 people 65+ willing to take part in the co-creation sessions.
Steps:
1. Disseminate information about the co-creation sessions – please see <i>Appendix 1</i>. 2. Select participants who meet the criteria. 3. Send confirmation to the selected people with details about the next steps.
Timeframe – March 2024

Inviting the same participants for all two sessions allows for participants to build trust within the group and to deepen their ideas about the curriculum. Building trust within a group can be key in meaningful participation of older adults and can contribute to people speaking up during the process (Baur & Abma, 2013, Montreuil, et.al, 2019). In organizing the two co-creation sessions with four months in between, we hope to keep people involved during the process and reduce the risk of participants dropping out. In the invitation for participants, we will make clear that they are invited for two sessions.

If a participant has a disability and needs support from an informal carer, this is possible.

2.3 Organisation of the co-creation sessions

The co-creation sessions will be organised in an environment where people can feel comfortable and free, for example in their local community center and, as this can influence the dynamics during a co-creation session (Oude Weernink & van Zaalen, 2018). Also, it might be valuable to invite participants to an inspiring environment, to stimulate the creative flow (Ibid.). A location that is easily accessible should be selected. For instance, sessions can be organised in the city center, at a public location easily accessible for older adults, such as the Senior Centers and University of the 3rd age.

Make sure there is enough light and fresh air in the room. If the room is too hot or has a lack of oxygen, this can affect the energy level of participants. If the room is too cold or too dark, this can affect the focus of participants. Also make sure to check for a location with not too much background noise. Older people sometimes can suffer from hearing impairments, which can be of influence on their participation in the sessions.

Food and drinks are very important to make people feel welcome. Make sure there is sufficient catering. This can be adapted to the customs of each country.

Each session will be facilitated by one or two researchers from the local research team. One researcher will lead the session, and the second researcher will observe the process and make notes about the process. Both researchers will facilitate all three sessions in their country. Each session will be discussed in a meeting with all the researchers in advance, and after the session to discuss the process and findings. By organising the one or two co-creation sessions with the same participants, each follow-up session will provide room for participants to adjust, add or deepen their earlier input. Researchers can check and nuance findings.

3. Co-creation Sessions

In each country, the co-creation sessions will be organised and facilitated by following the design in this manual. In the co-creation sessions, a mix of creative methods are used, to enhance facilitating meaningful participation (Tavy et al., 2022). Creative methods can be of additional value when it comes to topics that are more difficult to imagine at first glance, and it can enhance the group process (Sleeswijk Visser, 2007; Tavy et.al, 2022, von Faber et.al, 2021).

During the sessions special attention is given to creating the right atmosphere, with the selection of creative methods, and the opportunity to discuss in small groups. This can be of importance in organising meaningful participation (Dedding & Slager, 2012, Baur & Abma, 2013, Tavy et al., 2022).

All sessions will be recorded on audio. Creative products will be kept and photographed, and visual notes will be photographed (for example notes on flip-over charts). Pictures of the sessions will be made. Participants will be asked to sign a form for the use of pictures during the sessions, and the use of pictures of the creative products, in future publications (Appendix 2&3).

The following section of the manual will provide instructions for facilitating the co-creation sessions.

3.1. Co-creation Session 1

April 2024

Aims of the first session:

- Introducing the project and creating shared goals and expectations for the co-creation process. Testing/evaluating the modules.
- Building mutual trust and getting to know each other.
- Gaining a first insight into what participants find important and would like to include in the curriculum.

Planning: 2 hours

Participants: Ideally 5-8 participants.

Attributes:

One computer with internet, connection to beamer/smartboard,
Informed consent forms (two for each participant to sign) and information sheets,
Printed versions of the module (for participants),

Markers,
Post-its,
Pens (for participants),
Two sheets of blank paper for each participant,
PPT with information about the project (including the TOC of the curriculum and structure of the e-learning platform).

During the session:

1. Getting to know each other & coffee/tea and snacks (10 minutes)
2. Introduction of the project (10 minutes)
3. Discussing goals, roles & expectations of co-creation (10 minutes)
4. Evaluating the module (60 minutes)
5. Break (10 minutes)
6. Brainstorming (15 minutes)
7. Closing remarks (5 minutes)

1. Getting to know each other & coffee/tea and snacks (10 minutes)

Creating an atmosphere where people can meet each other, and have fun, can contribute to facilitating meaningful participation (Tavy et al, 2022, Baur & Abma, 2012, Oude Weernink & van Zaalen, 2018). The group will have time to drink some coffee or tea and eat a slice of cake (or other food and drinks, adapted to the customs of each country). Moderator/researcher will also participate in this activity.

2. Introduction of the project (10 minutes)

With a PowerPoint presentation, the background of the project (project team as well), and the TOC of the learning materials will be introduced. In this stage of the session information regarding the e-learning platform will be conveyed orally only (not to influence the co-creators). A Q&A session will be initiated after the presentation.

Note: Steps 1 and 2 can be combined, the moderator/researcher can choose whether they want to do the introduction with coffee/tea and snacks.

3. Discussing goals, roles & expectations of co-creation (10 minutes)

The moderator/researcher starts a discussion and asks the group to finish the sentences below:

- I will be happy if at the end of the co-creation sessions....
- I will be disappointed if at the end of the co-creation sessions...
- What I expect of the co-creation sessions is...

Data protections statement and consent forms will be filled in (the research team will bring extra copies, two per participant) (Appendix 2&3).

4. Evaluating the module (60 minutes)

Each country will select one module (they will choose from the modules they developed). The moderator/researcher can choose the medium in which they want to display the module; can be printed, viewed on a beamer/smartboard, sent to participants, etc. If the module includes video(s) and game(s), the moderator/researcher can choose how to

view/interact. The module will be tested/evaluated both group and individually. The following topics and questions can be used as guideline for the evaluation:

Information/topic:

- Are there topics of information within this module that are/is missing?
- Do you find the information appealing/interesting/useful? What is useful what not?
- Right amount of detail?
- Should we include more or less videos, more images, etc.?
- Is the information understandable? Are there parts that are too easy or difficult?

Language:

- Is the language used in the text understandable? Appealing? Difficult/easy? Too long text/too short? Type of language (more or less formal)?
- Does the text hold your attention? If not, where?

Structure:

- Are the steps easy to follow?
- Is the story logical to you?

Other issues?

Do a short brainstorm on fun (doable) exercises for modules.

5. Break (10 minutes)

6. Brainstorming (15minutes)

This will be explored in a group brainstorm, after evaluating the module, where the moderator/researcher brainstorms with the group about the structure options of the e-learning platform by using the questions below:

Information about the e-learning platform:

- Let people choose how to present modules – structure (Use the slides 3-4-5), leave room for suggestions.
- Do we present all content at the beginning, and can people choose themselves, or do they need to follow everything in a certain order? If yes, in which order.

7. Closing remarks (5 minutes)

Participants will be thanked. We will invite the group again for the next session and we will inform the group that we then will share information from the other countries. We will tell them that if they come up with new information or things they would like to nuance or add in the following weeks, there will be room for this in the next session.

Make sure to take some photos:)

3.2 Co-creation Session 2

October 2024 (Latest Mid-October)

Aims of the second session:

- To cluster what people would like to see on learning place (platform) and the module.
- To gain insight about the preference of participants for visual aspects and functionalities of the learning place.
- To exchange the reflections of other participants from the participating countries.
- To test the module and learning place.

Planning: 1 hour and 45 minutes

Participants: Different participants from those who attended the first co-creation session (10 new older adults) AND professionals (10 professionals)

Attributes:

Computers or tablets,
One computer with internet, connection to beamer/smartboard,
Informed consent forms (two for each participant to sign) and information sheets,
Presentation about the project,
Big coloured construction papers,
Markers,
Post-its.

Crafting materials:

Big colored construction paper (enough for three groups of 3-4 people to work with during one session),
Post-its,
Colored markers.

During the session:

1. Coffee/tea (15 minutes)
2. Presentation (15 minutes)
3. Break (10 minutes)
4. Evaluating the module and the learning place (60 minutes)
5. Closing remarks (5 minutes)

1. Coffee/tea, looking back & forward (15 minutes)

Welcoming the participants.

Moderator/researcher will also participate in this activity.

2. Presentation (15 minutes)

Short introduction on the project objectives and expected outcomes will be presented to show the project's progress.

The Data protection statement and consent forms will be filled in (the research team will bring extra copies, two per participant) (Appendix 2&3).

3. Break (10 minutes)

4. Evaluating the module (60 minutes)

The selected module will be used. The moderator/researcher demonstrates the module and the learning place on the computer with internet that will be connected to beamer/smartboard. Also, participants will test the learning place individually on the computers (or tablets).

Then, the participants evaluate the module and the learning place. They reflect their ideas on the module and the learning place through an unstructured group discussion and by creating a big mindmap on a large sheet of paper (Markers, Post-its, pens can be used). Researcher can use the data sheet (Appendix 4).

Additionally, the moderator/researcher will ask the participants their opinions about the name of the virtual assistant, **Alfi** and the platform, **Learning Place**.

5. Closing remarks (5 minutes)

Participants will be thanked. Make sure to take pictures of the mindmap.

4. References

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World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe. *Creating Age-Friendly Environments in Europe. A Tool for Local Policy-Makers and Planners*; WHO Regional Office for Europe: Copenhagen, Denmark, **2016**.

Appendix 1: Invitation letter

date, city

Dear Sir / Madam,

We are happy to invite you for participating in our project “**AFECO – Empowering older adults to apply affordable eco- and age-friendly solutions to age in place**”, by [to be added by each partner].

The core idea of the AFECO project is to empower older adults to apply affordable age-friendly and eco-friendly solutions in their own living environments to foster their participation in society, quality of life and prolonged independent living. AFECO is a cross-national project funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union that aims to develop a well-structured and open e-learning platform aiming to raise awareness and educate older people, (in)formal caregivers and social workers. We think age-friendly and eco-friendly environments (home and community/neighbourhood) are valuable tools in the caregiving context that can compensate for the biological decline in case of frailty or disease of older people in need of care.

What: We would like to invite you to think with us in two different co-creation sessions about educational materials and an e-learning platform, how should it look like, what should be on it, and how can we make this platform in a way that people will use it? Input of people themselves is very important, for then we can develop educational materials and design this platform in a way that is of value to older citizens.

When: The first session will be organised on [to be added by each partner]. From [to be added by each partner]. The second session will take place in September 2024.

Where: [to be added by each partner].

[Optional, information about coffee/tea and snacks [to be added by each partner]]

For more information please contact: [to be added by each partner]

Best regards,

[to be added by each partner]

Appendix 2: Data protection statement

The core idea of the AFECO project is to empower older adults to apply affordable age-friendly and eco-friendly solutions in their own living environments to foster their participation in society, quality of life and prolonged independent living. AFECO is a cross-national project funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union that aims to develop a well-structured and open e-learning platform aiming to raise awareness and educate older people, (in)formal caregivers and social workers. We think age-friendly and eco-friendly environments (home and community/neighbourhood) are valuable tools in the caregiving context that can compensate for the biological decline in case of frailty or disease of older people in need of care.

Protecting your personal information is important to us. This notice outlines what we do with the information we collect and store.

Background

As part of the educational materials' development process, we facilitate co-creation sessions to test the modules and to gather assessments about them from people aged 65 or over. Based on this data the project partners of the AFECO project will develop information and educational material about affordable age-friendly and eco-friendly principles.

Your participation in the co-creation sessions

Your participation in the co-creation sessions is voluntary. You are free to choose which part of the co-creation sessions you want to be participated, and you may stop participation at any time without giving any explanation.

Use of the collected information

- We will treat all the information about you with strict confidentiality and in accordance with EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and [country] data protection law.
- Only the organisation that collects your data, has access to your contact data.
- When the data collection is completed, all personal data will be anonymised.
- The project partners of the AFECO project will work with the anonymous data afterwards. This will be done according to scientific criteria and with absolute respect for personal privacy rights.
- Your name and contact information will be deleted before the data is published and no later than June 2030.
- The rest of the collected and anonymised data will be securely stored for an indefinite period.
- We will make every effort to ensure that no participant is identifiable in the project report or in any publications based on the study; exceptions are only possible if the usage of the name or image is desired by written declaration.

Your rights

As long as we can identify your answers, you have the right to object to the processing of your personal data, to access, rectify and erase any information about you, and to ask us what information we hold about you. Once details such as your name and address are removed, then it will no longer be possible to delete the information you provided.

Responsible organisations

The project is performed by AFEDEMY Academy on Age-friendly Environments in Europe (The Netherlands), Hague University of Applied Sciences (The Netherlands), Uniwersytet Przyrodniczy We Wrocławiu (Poland), SHINE 2Europe (Portugal), I.S.R.A.A. Istituto per Servizi di Ricovero e Assistenza Agli Anziani (Italy), ISIS Institut für Soziale Infrastruktur gGmbH (Germany), FRODIZO Corporation for Succor and Care of Elderly and Disabled (Greece).

These organisations are also responsible for conducting interviews/focus groups in their respective country.

For more information on the AFECO project:

<https://afeco.eu/>

For more information on the General Data Protection Regulation:

https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-topic/data-protection/reform/rights-citizens/my-rights_en

Contacts

European coordination:

Willeke van Staalduinen, AFEdemy Academy on Age-friendly Environments in Europe:
willeke@afedemy.eu

Contact person in [country]:

[to be added by each partner]

Appendix 3: Consent form

Please tick all appropriate boxes:

☐	I hereby declare that I am willing to take part in co-creations sessions of AFECO.
☐	I declare that I have been properly informed about the AFECO project and I understand the written and verbal explanations.
☐	I was given proper time to reflect on the participation request; I had the opportunity to make the necessary questions and I received satisfactory answers.
☐	I authorise audio/video recordings which will only be used for analysing the data from the co-creation sessions and further technical development.
☐	I know that the data from the co-creation sessions will be analysed and summarised by my moderator/researcher; I will have the right to review this summary before it is shared with the research team for integration in the synthesis report.
☐	I was informed that the data will only be stored until the end of the AFECO project and a review period (June 2030 at the latest), after which it will be deleted and that I can access or change/delete it at any time before that, and if not already anonymised.
☐	I understand that my name will only be displayed with my express consent.
☐	I understand that I can withdraw my participation at any time, without having to give any explanation and will have no penalties because of it.
☐	I would like to receive more information about the AFECO project and receive the project newsletter (about 2 times a year) to the following email address: _____

*Please, select **ONLY ONE** option:*

☐	I would like my name to be used as a participant in AFECO co-creation sessions and I understand it can be used in different reports and publications within the scope of this project.
☐	I do not allow my name to be used.

PARTICIPANT

Name:

Date:

Signature

MODERATOR/RESEARCHER:

Name:

Appendix 4: Data sheet

This form will be filled in by the moderator/researcher after the **second co-creation session** (to be filled in for each country). Feel free to insert rows according to your need.

Date:		
Location:		
Number of Participants:		
Evaluating the learning place	What do people like:	What people don't like:
-Colours: -Functions: -Menu: -Letters: -Buttons: -Finding information: -Virtual assistant- Alfi - - - -		
Notes:		

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