Next Door

IO4 LSRG EU Summary

Fostering neighbourhood participation to protect and

care for elderly citizens

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Introduction

Recognizing the need for localized and community-driven approaches, the Next Door project introduced Local Social Resources Groups (LSRGs) as a means to facilitate engagement, dialogue, and action in a community. LSRGs have served as dynamic forums where local representatives, professionals, volunteers, and community members collaborate to nourish proximity initiatives tailored to their specific contexts.

By examining the experiences and insights of stakeholders in Münster (Germany), Carpi and Gualtieri (Italy), Aveiro (Portugal), Ilhavo (Portugal), Arouca (Portugal), Sueca (Spain), Bucharest (Romania), Rousies (France) and Liverpool (UK), this report focuses on the impact of LSRGs in those territories.

The following sections present an analysis of the recommendations made by LSRGs, the successes achieved, challenges encountered, and the potential areas for improvement identified. By understanding the experiences and lessons from diverse communities, this report aims to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on creating age-friendly territories that not only address the needs of the elderly but also foster intergenerational collaboration, social inclusion, and community well-being.

The LSRG in BRIEF

Number of Countries involved	7: France | Germany | Italy | Portugal | Romania| Spain | UK
Number of Groups piloted	10
Number of Participants in total	28 + 11 + 21 + 9 + 6 + 28 + 35 + 12 + 74 = **224**
Average of participants per meeting	6
Dates **/** Duration of of the groups meetings	January 2023 to August 2023 / From 2 to 7 months
Format on the meetings	Out the 10 Groups piloted, 8 were fully face to face, one was online and 1 changed between sessions.

Across seven European countries, including France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Spain, and the UK, the Next Door project successfully established **10 Local Social Resources Groups** (LSRGs) aimed at enhancing age-friendly initiatives. These groups collectively engaged a diverse pool of participants, totaling **224 individuals**. With an average of 6 participants per meeting, these LSRGs convened from **January 2023 to August 2023**, spanning a duration of **2 to 7 months**. Notably, **8 out of the 10 groups** primarily operated in **face-to-face settings**, fostering direct interaction and collaboration. One group conducted its sessions online, while another transitioned between both formats, reflecting the adaptability of the project to accommodate different circumstances and preferences.

All groups met at the frequency of once a month, except for one that met twice a month.

 Key demographics of participants:

Münster, Germany	Participants comprised community members, students, and community workers aged 30 to 45, representing a diverse mix of genders.
Carpi, Italy	8 participants - 7 women and 1 man; 2 young, 4 adults, and 2 seniors; 6 volunteers, 1 social worker, and 1 educator.
Gualtieri, Italy	3 participants - 3 women; 2 adults and 1 senior; 2 social workers and 1 volunteer.
Aveiro, Portugal	Participants were mostly women (with two men) consisting of technical directors, socio-cultural animators, social workers, and psychologists from institutions serving the elderly in Aveiro. They were part of the Senior Network of Aveiro.
Ílhavo, Portugal	Participants were mostly women (with two men) and primarily consisted of technicians from the Ílhavo Ageing Laboratory, with only two individuals from the general population.
Arouca, Portugal	The participants were exclusively women from health, social, and municipal areas, representing ACES, social service professionals for older people, and technical personnel from the Municipality of Arouca
Sueca, Spain	Participants included 27 women and 1 man who were social workers from various city councils within the Ribera Baixa County Council
Bucharest, Romania	Participants ranged from 21 to 70 years old, mostly female. They worked in the NGO sector, providing social services to the elderly, in roles such as management, PR, social work students, public

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	social service workers, day center coordinators, older adults, and professors.
Rousies, France	Participants consisted of elderly beneficiaries of the Afeji Establishment, individuals from the municipality of Rousies, a community worker, care professionals, and coordinators from Afeji. All participants were women, aged 21 to 89, and 8 out of 12 lived in the same rural area (Hainaut Cambrésies).
Liverpool, UK	Participants were Social Workers, Psychologists, Community Representatives,Community Development works ,Age related charity workers and Older members of the community.

Across these diverse countries, the participant profiles were characterized by a mix of genders and a focus on engaging professionals, volunteers, and community members with a stake in elderly care and well-being. Most groups had a predominant presence of women. Additionally, various age ranges were represented, with some groups emphasizing involvement from the elderly themselves. These profiles highlight the concerted efforts to involve a wide spectrum of stakeholders, enabling well-rounded discussions and comprehensive strategies for enhancing the quality of life for the elderly.

Location:

The choice of meeting locations in each country varied based on practical considerations and the goals of the LSRGs. While some groups opted for casual cafes, social centers, and dedicated laboratories, others chose both physical and virtual spaces to accommodate specific circumstances, ensuring accessibility and engagement.

The diversity in meeting locations highlights the adaptability of the LSRGs to different contexts, whether by fostering direct community interaction, leveraging established facilities, or utilizing digital platforms.

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Objectives

Despite the shared overarching goal, each group had its unique focus and approach, demonstrating the diversity in addressing the challenges of elderly populations across Europe.

While the specific objectives varied across countries, the overarching themes focused on improving the quality of life, well-being, and social engagement of the elderly population. The objectives aligned with community engagement, collaboration, resource utilization, and the identification of unmet needs to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for seniors in these European Union countries. The objectives for each country were the following:

- **Münster (Germany):** The objective here was to leverage existing International Table Meetings (ITM's) to discuss citizen life and issues in the city of Münster. The LSRGs aimed to explore ways to make Münster more age-friendly and support intergenerational activities. The focus was on enhancing community connections and involving citizens in shaping a more inclusive environment.
- **Carpi (Italy):** The aim of the group was to engage active community members to reflect on methods and interventions that could improve the quality of life for the elderly. Topics such as leisure activities, support networks, and digital literacy were discussed, with a focus on enhancing the elderly's well-being.
- **Gualtieri (Italy):** The main purpose was to involve the community in addressing the mobility challenges faced by the elderly.
- **Aveiro (Portugal) :** By reflecting on local involvement and activation of actors, the objective was to reduce isolation and improve overall quality of life for the elderly population.
- **Ílhavo (Portugal):** The objective was to incorporate a Volunteering Programme into the Ageing Laboratory. The goal was to engage the community in volunteering activities, thereby enhancing the quality of life and well-being of the elderly population through social interaction and meaningful engagement.
- **Arouca (Portugal):** This objective centered on identifying existing community activities, resources, and services to provide better care for the elderly. By recognizing and optimizing available resources, the aim was to improve the overall support and well-being of the elderly population.
- **Sueca (Spain):** The focus was on discussing ideas for improving the region by aligning with European policies of social inclusion for the 2030 agenda. The LSRG targeted senior-related topics to enhance the overall social landscape and well-being of seniors in the region.
- **Bucarest (Romania):** This group aimed to foster community engagement, promote active aging, and create non-formal networks within local neighborhoods. The meetings sought to identify challenges faced by older citizens, develop strategies to address these challenges, and focus on well-being and independence through collaboration and resource utilization.
- **Rousies (France):** The objective was to convene various stakeholders to discuss existing services for elderly individuals in the rural area. By identifying unmet needs and issuing

recommendations, the LSRG aimed to enhance support systems and ensure the well-being of the elderly population in the rural context.

- **Liverpool (UK)**: The aim of the meetings included how to involve relevant key stakeholders and community members to enhance the quality of elders, be more inclusive and reduce social isolation.

Methodology

1. Participant Engagement Methods

Across the European Union, the Local Social Resources Groups utilized various methods to engage participants in their discussions and activities. These methods were tailored to the local context and aimed to gather input, insights, and expertise from diverse stakeholders. Here's a summary of the participant engagement methods used in each country:

- Münster, Germany:

Participants were selected through existing ACEEU contacts with an interest in community engagement topics. Some participants had prior familiarity with the Next Door project due to their involvement in awareness-raising activities.

Participants were introduced to the project during the first meeting, where they brainstormed topics for discussion and explored how to sustain the awareness of increasing neighborhood support for the elderly even after the project's conclusion.

- Carpi and Gualtieri, Italy:

Participants were reached through the ANS network of contacts and consisted of members from established networks supporting the elderly. Two separate groups were launched in Carpi and Gualtieri involving voluntary associations, social services, and municipal representatives. Meetings took place during already scheduled gatherings, deepening actions and addressing specific local challenges.

The meetings were organized based on group availability. For the 1st group, three meetings covered various spontaneously emerging topics. The 2nd group met once, focusing on a specific issue. The process followed included:

Introduction and objective setting / Identification of topics for recommendations / Defining needs and problems / Analyzing causes and effects (using a Problem Tree approach) / Discussing solutions and involved actors

- Aveiro, Portugal:

The LSRG extended the group that participated in training. Participants included professionals from various institutions in Aveiro, forming the Senior Network. This group's involvement flowed naturally due to their pre-existing engagement and interest in continued collaboration.

Sessions were designed according to the Action Plan and design thinking tools. One relevant aspect was that the LSRGs was able to bring to the meetings some key directors of the different institutions.

That made institutions closer and gave professionals a good spirit to continue their efforts for older people and ageing in Aveiro.

- Ílhavo, Portugal:

The LSRG working group was an extension of the group that participated in the IO3 training. However, only the technicians assigned to the Ageing Laboratory remained present and participative throughout all the LSRG sessions.

Sessions followed the Action Plan and using design thinking tools, the sessions were organised to promote participants' reflection on how to involve citizens as volunteers in supporting the older population.

- Arouca, Portugal:

Similar to other Portuguese districts, the LSRG was an extension of the IO3 training group. Participants aimed to survey local resources and services to enhance visibility through social prescription, promoting community well-being.

Sessions followed the Action Plan and design thinking tools. Participants reflected on recognizing networking and identifying available resources in the municipality.

- Sueca, Spain:

The LSRG was established among professionals from the social services of the Ribera Baixa County Council. Collaboration and engagement were facilitated through meetings and discussions with key stakeholders.

The first meeting involved brainstorming about essential topics for LSRG discussions. Resulting topics included leisure, isolation, and social resources. These topics formed the basis for the subsequent sessions.

- Bucharest, Romania:

LSRGs were promoted through EASI events and online platforms, including social media. Participants registered through forms, with communication via email and WhatsApp. Meetings were organized with participant availability in mind, fostering idea exchange and networking.

Meetings had flexible agendas and focused on building a list of issues, addressing them individually. The fourth meeting involved role-playing to tackle specific issues.

- Rousies, France:

The LSRG in Rousies collaborated closely with the municipality and the director of an Afeji establishment. This partnership facilitated participant engagement and coordination of discussions.

Topics were proposed by the service residency director, forming the core of discussions. The meeting dates were aligned with establishment calendars and LSRG participants. Additional topics were explored based on participants' preferences.

- Liverpool, UK :

The engagement approach for the Next Door project involved partnering with the Joseph Lappin Centre, a community organization known for its services and activities. Weekly drop-in sessions and visits to relevant local organizations were used to promote participation in resource groups. Meetings followed structured agendas, accommodating participants' availability. This flexible approach allowed diverse perspectives and deep discussions, enhancing the effectiveness of each session

Participant engagement methods varied but shared the goal of involving a diverse range of stakeholders to contribute to the discussions and activities of the LSRGs. These methods included using existing networks, collaborating with key institutions and utilizing online communication platforms. The engagement approaches underscored the importance of local context and relationship-building to foster meaningful contributions from participants

The processes used across countries shared common elements, including brainstorming, structured discussions, problem analysis, and solution generation.

2. Results

- Münster, Germany:

In Münster, there was a notable increase in interest and engagement concerning the Next Door project's topics. ACEEU, recognizing the enthusiasm of participants, will make sure to share the developed Next Door model with them. This proactive approach aimed to empower participants to champion the cause of heightened neighborhood participation, thereby maintaining momentum and active involvement even after the project's conclusion.

- Carpi and Gualtieri, Italy:

In Carpi and Gualtieri, the LSRGs delivered valuable outcomes across two distinct groups. In the first group, diverse topics were addressed:

Leisure Activities: Participants highlighted the significance of companionship, fostering friendships, and meaningful conversations among the elderly. These needs were paired with playful activities and crafting endeavors that are both affordable and can occur during community events.

Support Network: Participants recognized the importance of coordinated efforts among organizations and associations to provide comprehensive services for the elderly. Emphasis was placed on training, public engagement, and collaboration.

Digital Literacy: Positive feedback was received on the use of AI devices like Amazon Alexa to stimulate cognitive activities for the elderly. Exploratory activities were attempted, such as playing music, reading poems, and engaging in brain-training exercises.

The second group's focus was on mobility:

Mobility: A prominent issue emerged concerning transport availability for leisure activities in Gualtieri. The shortage of drivers at AUSER prompted discussions on aligning transport demand with volunteer availability. Experimental measures were discussed to test the feasibility of transporting the elderly to events, involving AUSER drivers and creating a transportation system based on mutual interest.

- Aveiro, Portugal:

In the Aveiro, the working group focused on combating isolation among older individuals. This aspiration led to the formation of a Local Leaders' Plenary. Various community stakeholders, equipped with decision-making authority, met to deliberate the present state of aging and elder care in the municipality. Needs were identified, existing resources cataloged, and best practices were pooled. Beyond this event, the group's commitment was evident through localized awareness campaigns across different parishes in Aveiro, with plans for sustained community engagement.

- Ílhavo, Portugal:

Similarly, in Ílhavo, the working group converged around the creation of a structured volunteering program to support older people. Deliberations led to the establishment of specific action areas and targeted volunteer profiles. The focus was on involving the community, fostering a sense of responsibility, and addressing the unique needs of the elderly. Practical steps were taken to ensure seamless implementation of the Volunteer Program, aligning with the overarching goals of the Ageing Laboratory.

- Arouca, Portugal:

In the Arouca, the LSRG identified a significant challenge—limited awareness among professionals regarding existing community resources. To bridge this gap, the group focused on collecting comprehensive information about available activities, interventions, and services within the municipality. This data was meticulously organized into a structured framework, which further evolved into plans for an online tool for easy access. The results revealed a clear need for streamlined communication and comprehensive resource visibility.

- Sueca, Spain:

The Sueca region achieved a consolidated set of ideas and recommendations through the LSRG meetings. A comprehensive report was produced, capturing the essence of discussions and proposed solutions. This document was disseminated among the participants, empowering them to put these ideas into practice when financial and personnel resources permit.

- Bucharest, Romania:

In Bucharest, the LSRGs were characterized by engaged discussions on policy development and recommendations. Effective communication and collaboration were at the forefront of these conversations. Participants highlighted the importance of understanding local contexts and accommodating diverse cultural factors. This collaborative spirit fostered a strong shared commitment and enthusiasm towards achieving common goals.

- Rousies, France:

Rousies witnessed a strengthened connection between local municipalities and service residency through the LSRG. Proposed initiatives, such as monthly events for elderly citizens, were met with positive reception from the mayor. Additionally, plans for continuing similar meetings and extending collaboration to neighboring municipalities showcased the intent to form a robust regional network.

- Liverpool, UK:

Local-level outcomes encompassed the recognition of challenges faced by older individuals, fostering an awareness of available local support systems. Moreover, a broader scope was established, encompassing concerns spanning housing, finance, and dietary aspects. The initiative not only galvanized a collective effort to enhance the well-being of seniors but also instilled a dedication to enact constructive transformations within the community. This commitment extended to cultivating increased intergenerational engagements, nurturing connections between older and younger residents.

The results across the participating countries underscore the outcomes achievable through collaborative efforts within LSRGs. These outcomes include increased awareness, targeted action plans, and the cultivation of community engagement. The discussions and strategies within these groups demonstrate a collective determination to address the challenges faced by older populations. Moreover, the emphasis on sustaining efforts beyond the Next Door project highlights the enduring impact of these initiatives.

Recommandations

Under the Next Door project, each country should issue two recommendations. A total of twenty recommendations emerged from the LSRG that collectively highlight six overarching themes and strategies to address the challenges faced by the elderly population:

Promoting Active Engagement and Socialization:

- (Münster, Germany) Establish and support senior-led community programs and activities that encourage active participation and social engagement among the elderly population.

  By providing opportunities for seniors to engage in and lead social and recreational activities, cities can foster a sense of belonging and enhance the overall quality of life for this demographic group.

  Implementation Steps: Allocate funding to support community centers, senior centers, and local organizations that offer a variety of programs tailored to the interests and abilities of the elderly. Encourage intergenerational activities that promote interaction between seniors and younger generations, fostering mutual understanding and creating a sense of community. Develop a comprehensive calendar of events that includes physical activities, cultural events, workshops, and educational sessions specifically designed for elderly participants. Collaborate with local businesses, cultural institutions, and healthcare providers to create partnerships that facilitate the implementation of diverse senior-oriented activities. Empower senior volunteers to take active roles in organizing and leading community programs, tapping into their knowledge and experiences to enrich the offerings (National Level)

- (Carpi and Gualtieri Italy): Create initiatives that encourage social interaction among the elderly and involve them in planning and participation.

  In the Italian context the need for listening, observation and greater knowledge of the elderly in order to be able to offer leisure activities was highlighted. The group of volunteers should be heterogeneous and with young members enabling intergenerational relations. Such groups should also be adequately trained and supported by institutions. When talking about planning and designing leisure activities for the elderly, it is very important to consider the fact that must be offered the elderly simple activities that engage them. At the same time, they need to be given the opportunity to express themselves and tell their stories so that they can be offered more targeted proposals that give them a greater sense of fulfillment and openness. Public authorities should support the work at community level, through resources and the promotion of networking of the various associations. Considering also that many elderly people spend so much time at home, leisure activities should be offered outside their homes, so as to motivate them to go out after, however, building a bond of trust and security to go out. Finally, the group of volunteers should be increased, targeting young people in particular so that there is an intergenerational factor. For example, young people could be involved in supporting learning to use Artificial Intelligence (AI), which was considered useful and

interesting. The AI can be used in small groups at local level to promote socialization activities under the coordination of a volunteer or a professional. (Local level)

- (Rousies France): Encourage the participation of the municipality in funding and organizing events that foster interaction and support networks for elderly citizens.

  The recommendation is to encourage the participation of municipalities in the funding, organization and communication of events for elderly people in various stages of life (autonomous and living in their home and less autonomous living in establishments dedicated to their needs). The Idea is to break the gap between living at home and in establishments. By raising awareness and opening establishments to activities for all, when seniors do need to move into a residency or nursing home, the transition can be smoother. And by having various options of activities outside and within the establishment with other actors, elderly can keep their support network longer and even see it being reinforced.

  One concrete proposition is a senior musical dinner once a month in the residency service, the cost of the meal being taken care of by the municipality for external participants and by the establishment for the resident. The meal would have a different theme every month and local musicians could be part of the animation of the dinner.

Community Empowerment and Involvement:

- (Münster, Germany): Establish Senior Advisory Councils for Urban Development.

  Seniors possess a wealth of life experience and insights that can significantly contribute to urban planning and development. Establishing Senior Advisory Councils that actively involve older residents in shaping the city's policies, infrastructure, and services can lead to more age friendly and inclusive urban environments (National Level).

- (Ílhavo Portugal): Involve communities in supporting the elderly through volunteering programs.

  A large percentage of older people in Portugal live in their homes. However, many of them live alone and rely only on proximity and neighborhood services, when they exist. For this reason, it becomes imperative to make communities aware of the need to support the elderly population through volunteering. To do so, it is necessary to plan and organize activities that reach out to people and motivate them to become volunteers.

- (Sueca Spain): Promote volunteering activities from both private associations and public entities to create activities for the elderly.

- (Liverpool UK): Every community is different and has different needs. It is essential to consult with all relevant stakeholders in the local community to determine needs and how they could potentially be met. An action should be live, ever evolving according to emerging themes and challenges.

Addressing Mobility:

- (Carpi and Gualtieri Italy): Address mobility issues by providing transportation options for the elderly.

  The problem of isolation of the elderly is sometimes related to and exacerbated by poor mobility and the difficulty of reaching places or proposed initiatives. This may be due to the fact that with advancing age some older people stop driving and that there is not much public transport connecting different areas. When considering initiatives for older people this should therefore be a priority issue to consider, ensuring that there is transport for older people and for those who have no alternative means of getting around. In this regard, it is recommended to analyze the various opportunities available, optimizing any resources already available. For example, in Italy, the AUSER association 'Telefono Amico' has few volunteer drivers at its disposal and therefore concentrates on transport for social and health services. However, the possibility of involving volunteer drivers in leisure activities for the elderly was started on an experimental basis. In this way they could reach the venue of events and also transport the elderly for that specific occasion, by asking only paying a small fee for transportation. (Local level)

Policy and Institutional Support:

- (Aveiro Portugal): Create open lines of communication with stakeholders to address the isolation of older people.

  Portugal is the third most aged country in Europe and half of the people who live alone are over 65 years old. This is indeed a problem that must be truly faced and dealt with rigorously. In addition to the typified social services, there are still few cooperation and community involvement services in Portugal that provide an effective response to those who feel isolated. The first step involves making political power and local agents aware of this reality, leading to reflection on the resources needed to be activated and what can be done to improve the way people age in communities. To this end, it is important to create open and effective lines of communication with all those involved, by organizing meetings, plenaries and actions for joint reflection and defining local action plans with stakeholders.

- (Bucharest Romania): Creating a unified legal and administrative framework for the regulation of long-term care services at home, social and medical care for older adults

- (Bucharest Romania): The recognition of informal care as an occupation, that contributes to the social security system and that should be paid/receive compensation, for the cases where formal care is not accessible (for various reasons).

- (Bucharest Romania): Information and council or support services for families that take care of their elderly, without enrolling them in a care institution (institutional care only as a last resort). Compensation included if they engage in informal care.

- (Bucharest Romania): The creation of a National Agency for Vulnerable Elderly People, with its own authority, subordinated to the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, to manage the social assistance budget

Information and Resource Accessibility:

- (Arouca Portugal): Understanding the resources, services, activities, and spaces available in communities is crucial to effectively respond to the needs of each individual living there. Therefore, mechanisms should be established, such as databases or information networks, to understand and identify existing support systems for populations, particularly older individuals who often struggle to access this information. With this knowledge, it's possible to invest in social prescription.

- (Bucharest Romania): Improvement of access and distribution of information with regards to financing for institutions or associations working with vulnerable population in the rural areas.

- (Bucharest Romania): Create a single information line to provide comprehensive information about health, legal, and socialization options for the elderly.

- (Liverpool UK): Community venues need to be promoted, utilized and celebrated. If they are underused, explore why and come together as a community to offer opportunities and resources to enrich the lives of those who are isolated, vulnerable and have so much more to offer.

Adapting Spaces and Housing:

- (Aveiro Portugal): Repurpose public spaces for community activation to promote social interaction.

  Another recommendation that emerged from this LSRG is the reuse of public spaces, which are sometimes abandoned and obsolete, for public use by the community to promote social interaction. These spaces function as spaces for community activation and include not only public green parks, but also buildings that are not being used or even simple rooms in organizations that are not always occupied (in parish councils, institutions, etc.).

- (Sueca Spain): Investment in creating more care centers and residences with different models. Promotion of cohousing model and flat sharing both intergenerational and generational.

- (Rousies France): Create intergenerational housing solutions that accommodate senior citizens and students for improved housing and community interactions.

  The reinforcement of intergenerational local activities and a recommendation to fund intergenerational housing solutions. Such Housing would not only accommodate senior citizens and their needs but would welcome students in need of reasonable housing solutions.

This recommendation answers another local need: A housing crisis in formation in some areas that are at risk of floods and that have no choice but to limit the construction authorisations being delivered, increasing the price of housing offers and making it unaffordable for lower incomes (such as students and elderly).

Those intergenerational housing facilities would double as an intergenerational day center, where external people can meet for various activities including youth and elderly citizens.

Another Idea was to include a daycare in such a housing facility with activities where residents would interact with the youngsters.

The recommendations collectively showcase a commitment to enhancing the well-being and quality of life of the elderly population. By addressing social, physical, and policy aspects through a collaborative approach, the LSRGs are striving to create age-friendly communities that celebrate the contributions and aspirations of older individuals while fostering a sense of belonging and connection.

Evaluation of the the LSRG

The participants in the Local Social Resource Groups (LSRGs) expressed various levels of interest and perceived value in the meetings, with common themes emerging across different locations:

Engagement and Mobilization:

In Münster, Germany: Participants found LSRGs effective in triggering citizen engagement and mobilization. The informal nature of the meetings provided an opportunity for people who might not typically engage in such discussions to actively contribute their opinions. Participants mentioned feeling a sense of ownership and responsibility toward their neighborhood.

In Carpi and Gualtieri, Italy: LSRGs were seen as motivation for involvement and collaborative problem-solving. They allowed participants to reflect on specific problems, brainstorm solutions, and identify relevant stakeholders. However, there was a desire to involve a broader range of stakeholders, including those who were not already active in supporting the elderly.

In Aveiro, Portugal: The LSRGs facilitated collaborative relationships, resource sharing, and knowledge exchange among professionals and institutions. The working groups were motivated to create impactful initiatives for their communities.

In Ilhavo, Portugal: Participants appreciated the collaboration among professionals in LSRGs and their shared goal. The success was reflected in the creation of a document that could be used to engage the community. However, there was a shift over time from a heterogeneous group to a smaller group of active participants.

Challenges and Online Participation:

In Arouca, Portugal: The online format allowed professionals from different sectors to participate initially, but maintaining involvement over time was challenging. The rural nature of Arouca contributed to difficulties in ensuring consistent participation.

In Sueca, Spain: While participants found non-formal meetings useful for discussing elderly-related topics and new ideas, managing schedules and ensuring consistent attendance posed challenges.

Networking and Collaboration:

In Bucharest, Romania: LSRGs were seen as an avenue for networking, collaboration, and sharing resources in the field of elderly care and services. Participants highlighted the importance of pooling expertise and resources to address critical issues and promote advocacy campaigns.

In Rousies, France: LSRGs initiated discussions between different stakeholders, fostering collaboration between municipalities, residency services, and citizens. Participants noted the importance of

accessible information and the LSRGs' role in bringing stakeholders together to address common issues.

In Liverpool, Uk: Relationships have been built, practices have been shared and an informal hub of information has been developed. During each session the group would discuss further plans and share ideas, such as arts and crafts workshops.

In summary, the participants found LSRGs valuable for triggering engagement, facilitating collaboration, and creating opportunities for discussion and problem-solving in the context of elderly care and services. The non-formal nature of these meetings appeared to contribute to their success, promoting open communication and encouraging creative thinking. However, challenges related to maintaining involvement and accessibility, especially in rural areas, were also acknowledged.

Continuity of the LSRG

The continuation of Local Social Resources Groups after the pilot phase varies across the different locations, reflecting both the enthusiasm of participants and the challenges faced:

Münster, Germany: Participants recognized the value of LSRGs in providing a continuous platform for discussions on elderly protection and community well-being. They expressed a commitment to raising further awareness in the city of Münster and continuing their engagement in addressing elderly-related issues.

Carpi and Gualtieri, Italy: The groups in Carpi and Gualtieri consisted of members who had already been collaborating to improve the quality of life for older people. Their participation in LSRGs allowed them to adopt new methods for analyzing problems and solutions, and they intend to continue their collaborative work in this direction.

Aveiro, Portugal: The group intends to carry forward the work of planning and organizing awareness-raising actions with political leaders and community agents. They have even sought additional funding to continue the work initiated by the Next Door project.

Ílhavo, Portugal: The group plans to officially launch the program and continue the work developed, anticipating the emergence of new interventions or activities proposed by the community.

Arouca, Portugal: Despite initial interest, the Arouca LSRG experienced decreased participation and eventual dissolution due to workload constraints and coordination challenges with the local municipality.

Sueca, Spain: The LSRGs in Sueca will continue discussions on seniors within the social workers meetings of the Ribera Baixa County Council. This indicates a desire to integrate LSRG discussions into existing professional frameworks.

Bucharest, Romania: Participants in Bucharest express interest in further meetings after the Next Door project concludes. They see LSRGs as a way to improve cooperation and service development in the elderly care sector, hoping for better outcomes and continuity compared to previous initiatives.

Rousies, France: The Rousies LSRG plans to continue its meetings at the service residency and is determined to broaden participation by reaching out to more seniors through communication campaigns, including distribution of flyers and inclusion in the municipality's newsletter.

Liverpool, UK: The group will and have continued to meet on a monthly basis, developing other groups including a choir, exercise class, dementia café and more recently a film club with the café offering free refreshments.

Overall, the participants' responses reflect a mix of ongoing commitment, enthusiasm for collaboration, and recognition of challenges in sustaining engagement and continuity beyond the pilot phase.

The obstacles and room for improvement of the LSRG

An overarching analysis of the points that could be improved in the Local Social Resources Groups (LSRGs) across the different locations reveals several common themes:

Continuity and Participation:

Across several locations, ensuring the continuity of the LSRGs and consistent participation emerged as a challenge. Some participants did not continue their involvement after the initial training phase, which impacted the sustained engagement and effectiveness of the groups. This discontinuity highlights the need for strategies to maintain participant interest and commitment over time.

Resource Limitations:

Participants in various regions highlighted resource limitations as an obstacle. This includes limited time, personnel, and funding to carry out the planned actions or initiatives discussed in the LSRG meetings. Translating ideas into action often requires additional resources, which can be a challenge, especially in the context of tight budgets and busy schedules.

Involvement of Community Members:

In several locations, there was an identified challenge involving a broader spectrum of community members, especially those who did not reside within the specific establishment or organization. Reaching elderly citizens outside of designated facilities or communities remains difficult due to barriers such as fear of entering unfamiliar spaces, leading to potential isolation of this group from external activities and events.

Facilitation and Internalization:

The need for effective facilitation was acknowledged, especially in the initial stages of the LSRGs. Facilitators were seen as crucial to help participants internalize the objectives and structure of the meetings. Clear guidance and facilitation can aid in establishing a cohesive and productive environment, particularly when participants are not yet familiar with the process.

Motivation and Immediate Results:

Stakeholders' motivation to participate might be challenged by the fact that the outcomes of LSRG meetings may not yield immediate results or short-term solutions. Encouraging ongoing engagement and commitment is crucial, as the impact of the discussions might manifest over time rather than immediately.

Common areas for improvement across the LSRGs include strategies to ensure continuous participation, address resource limitations, increase involvement of a diverse range of community members, provide effective facilitation, and manage expectations regarding the timeline and results

of the initiatives discussed. By addressing these challenges, the LSRGs can be more effective in achieving their goals of creating age-friendly territories and improving the well-being of elderly populations.

Contribution of the Next Door project to age-friendly territories

The Next Door project has demonstrated significant contributions to creating age-friendly territories in the participating regions. The following key themes emerge from the feedback provided by participants:

Empowerment and Collaboration: Participants from various locations emphasized how the Next Door project empowered community members to become proactive actors in creating age-friendly environments. The initiative facilitated collaboration among neighbors, community members, and organizations to prevent risk situations and establish informal care networks. This collaborative approach was seen as a catalyst for promoting social inclusion, sharing intergenerational knowledge, and supporting seniors' well-being.

Enriching Knowledge and Approaches: Participants acknowledged that the project enriched their understanding of strategies, methodologies, and existing options at the local level for supporting older people. It provided participants with new ways of thinking, acting, and mobilizing communities around the needs of the elderly population. The training courses offered through the project were particularly appreciated for their role in improving participants' daily work and enhancing their ability to address the specific challenges faced by older adults.

Building Age-Friendly Policies and Advocacy: The Next Door project not only connected citizens and organizations but also empowered participants to advocate for policy changes that promote the rights and well-being of older citizens. Through discussions and collaboration, participants contributed to shaping age-friendly policies that benefit the entire community. This advocacy aspect of the project underscores its broader impact on the societal level.

Networking and Visibility: The project facilitated opportunities for stakeholders who may not typically interact to come together and collaborate. The various activities implemented under the project, such as focus groups, training, awareness events, and Local Social Resources Groups, provided a platform for stakeholders to exchange ideas, increase visibility of local services, and enhance networking opportunities. The LSRGs, in particular, were highlighted as pivotal in reflecting on unmet needs and exploring potential solutions.

To conclude, the Next Door project has been welcomed by participants across different locations for its capacity to empower individuals and communities, enrich knowledge and approaches to elderly care, foster collaboration and advocacy, and increase networking and visibility of age-friendly services. These contributions collectively align with the goal of creating age-friendly territories that enhance the quality of life and well-being of older adults while promoting community engagement and collaboration.

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