

# Older Persons in Emergency Situations



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Rome 15-17 June 2022

Two years of the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted the vulnerability of older persons in emergency situations. In response to the crisis, national and local governments, civil society and private sector organizations, researchers as well as individual volunteers of all ages have proven resourceful and innovative in providing support to older persons at risk of being isolated, cut off essential services, and left behind.

The pandemic has drawn attention to the need of paying particular attention to older persons in data collection and analysis, relief efforts, civil protection, and disaster (risk) management, and to engage them as active agents in crisis management, regardless of the type of emergency.

This poster exhibition, displayed during the 2022 UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing in Rome, highlights inspiring examples from across the UNECE region, and beyond, of protecting, supporting, and engaging older persons in different types of emergencies.





**Dublin, Ireland**

**May 2020 – August 2021**



[www.tilda.tcd.ie](http://www.tilda.tcd.ie)

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**Poster exhibition on Older  
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# Altered lives in a time of crisis: the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lives of older adults in Ireland

**Emergency to which the project/activity responded**

COVID-19 Pandemic

**Project description**

The project surveyed almost 4,000 adults aged 60 and over who were participants in The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing. A self-completion questionnaire was designed by TILDA in collaboration with academic and NGO partners and sent to all TILDA participants. The data gathered sought to understand how the COVID-19 pandemic and associated public health restrictions affected older adults. Data concerned the impact on personal health both physical and mental; personal relationships; personal and household finances; employment; physical activity; healthcare utilization; and social activities and social connectedness. It also gathered data on compliance with, attitude toward, and understanding of public health mandates and recommendations. Findings were documented in two reports published in 2021.

**How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations**

The project surveyed a representative population of older adults about what they found most difficult in the pandemic restrictions, what they understood clearly in public messaging and what not, what sources of information they used, and how much they trusted it – all of which should inform future public health communication and planning for emergency situations.

**Lessons learned**

- Terminology and tone of public messaging are important: many participants found policies such as shielding/cocooning ageist and disliked the terms, while some felt the recommendations patronizing.
- Nevertheless, self-reported compliance rates with public health guidelines among older adults were very high. This was echoed in surveys by Ireland's Central Statistics Office and suggests older adults tend to observe public health guidelines with their own and others' safety in mind.
- A notable increase in drivers or indicators of poorer mental health – anxiety, loneliness, and depression – is something that deserves study to see whether it is mostly passing or persists after the pandemic.
- The pandemic showed changes in patterns of family caring among the TILDA study population compared to the previous wave that would not be attributable solely to the ageing of the cohort. People band together (often moving in with family) facing emergencies; it remains to be seen whether these patterns persist in future waves of TILDA.
- Resilience of older people in the face of the pandemic was very evident: many participants took up new hobbies and pastimes and chose to take the benefit from restrictions on movement and treat it as downtime. The attitude that one should 'just get on with it' in the public interest was common. This suggests adaptability and resilience of older people in emergency situations.
- There was the hope expressed that from the pandemic there might emerge a more compassionate society, with more concern for the common good and greater respect for those in 'frontline', often lower-paid, occupations. This may suggest many older people are ambivalent about the dominant, broadly neoliberal mindset in Irish society and its economized estimations of what is valuable. It represents an area for further qualitative sociological investigation.





## Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

November - December 2020

**UNFPA in Bosnia and Herzegovina**  
[www.ba.unfpa.org](http://www.ba.unfpa.org)

**Healthy Ageing Centres**  
<https://www.facebook.com/zdravostarenje.novosarajevo/>



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# Age-adapted gymnastics for healthy ageing, anywhere and anytime

**Emergency to which the project/activity responded**  
 COVID-19 pandemic

## Project description

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and NGO Partnership for Public Health (PPH) had cooperated for almost a decade to establish a network of Healthy Ageing Centres (HACs) in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and across the Eastern Europe region. The project aimed at providing a venue for older persons to socialize, learn new skills, engage in intergenerational cooperation but also maintain healthy lifestyles through regular age-adapted gymnastics. The first HAC opened in Sarajevo in 2011 and immediately attracted a lot of attention from local residents, municipal governments and the media due to its low investment and high sustainability, as well as its high contribution to the healthy ageing of the population. Since 2011 over a dozen more HACs were opened in BiH while similar day centres for older persons were opened in other countries (Serbia, North Macedonia and Georgia).

When the pandemic started, besides initial shock and lack of preparedness by countries to tackle such issues, many vulnerable population groups, including older persons, were asked to stay at home and self-isolate. Although this approach was somewhat benevolent to protect their lives, in an environment without a network of public services to help the most vulnerable population groups, such isolation started to cause almost equal damage as the pandemic itself. Vulnerable people were not able to buy food, obtain health care and engage in social and physical activities, thus putting a lot of pressure on their health. At the same time, HACs that provide such services to older persons were under lockdown as the gathering of the citizens was banned. At this time, an idea was born to record and broadcast age-adapted gymnastics for older persons, hence bringing the services of the HACs to the homes of older persons. In addition, the goal of the initiative was to provide wider outreach to older persons that did not have access to HACs in their communities, hence effectively increasing the number of people benefiting from healthy ageing activities.

A series of five videos with instructions on age-adapted gymnastics for older persons at home were recorded (one for each workday). The videos were distributed through social media channels and over the state and local TV broadcasters. The videos can be viewed online at this link: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/584771881640363/137395591111669> (with English subtitles).

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

Regular physical activities contribute to the improved physical and mental health of older persons, hence reducing the effects of long-term isolation during a pandemic. As a result, healthy members of society require less investment through public services and could contribute for a longer time their families and communities.

## Lessons learned

Although physical exercises are very important to preserve one's physical and mental health, their organisation and facilitation represent the most common obstacle in the provision of public services for older persons due to the lack of space for organising age-friendly services. This is where cooperation with the media and the use of social media comes to the forefront as means of distribution of relevant information to the general public. As many older persons are not acquainted with modern technologies and have limited capacities in accessing social media channels, national and private TV broadcasters remain the best partners for organising any outreach activities for older persons.





## Israel

April - June 2020

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# „We have become prisoners of our own age”: from a continuing care retirement community to a total institution in the midst of the COVID-19 outbreak

## Emergency to which the project/activity responded

During the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic in Israel, people residing in continuing care retirement communities (CCRC) found themselves under strict instructions to self-isolate, imposed by the CCRC managements before, during and after the nationwide lockdown. The present study explored the personal experiences of CCRC residents during the lockdown.

## Project description

In the light of the unique features of the CCRC setting, which has some characteristics of community living that foster independence and autonomy, but also features of long-term care settings, including the physical vulnerability of its residents and the structural features of the setting that make physical isolation challenging, the present study set out to bring the experiences of older adults during the lockdown and the slow reopening that followed. In total, 24 residents were interviewed. Interviews were analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis. Three major themes emerged through the analysis of interview data. The first theme: ‘us vs. them: Others are worse off’ concerned older residents’ constant attempts to compare their situation to that of others. Specifically, the older persons interviewed in this study compared their situation to others in the community, in their own setting and in the nursing unit, who were seen as being worse off. The overall message behind these downward comparisons was that the situation is not so bad, as others are in a worse predicament. A second theme, ‘Us vs. them: Power imbalance,’ also involved a comparison, but this time, between the older CCRC residents on the one hand and the staff and management on the other hand. In contrast to the former comparison that empowered and protected older adults from the challenges they faced during the lockdown, the latter comparison emphasized the unbalanced power relations between older adults and the staff and management in the setting. The third theme, ‘we have become prisoners of our own age,’ concerned the collapse of resources and coping. Interviewees described strong emotions of despair, depression, and anger, which were only intensified when the rest of society returned back to a new routine, whereas they were still under lockdown. For a subset of participants who were Holocaust survivors, these emotions were accompanied by vivid memories and experiences from the past, as they unanimously equated their current experiences with their traumatic past. Older CCRC residents vividly described the transformation of the CCRC from a place of pleasure and activity to a prison, even a form of solitary confinement. Although physically safe, most CCRC residents interviewed in this study reported a substantial reduction in their mental wellbeing, including high levels of anxiety, depression, anger and despair. The paternalistic approach, which attempted to protect residents at all costs, allowed for limited autonomy and self-assertion.

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

Current efforts should be geared towards maintaining routine and social activities, whilst protecting residents through targeted testing and the constant supply of personal protective equipment. Residents’ autonomy and self-assertion should be respected and encouraged as a means for maintaining emotional resilience during these unsettling times.

## Lessons learned

During the COVID-19 outbreak, CCRCs have become total institutions. Although physically safe, most CCRC residents interviewed in this study reported a substantial reduction in their mental wellbeing, including high levels of anxiety, depression, anger and despair. A state of complete lockdown and the deprivation of residents’ autonomy and knowledge of the situation should be refrained.





## Ireland

2021-2023 and beyond

### ALONE

<https://alone.ie/community-impact-network/>



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# ALONE and Community Impact Network

## Emergency to which the project/activity responded

Providing essential services to older people, alleviating social isolation and loneliness.

This project was to respond to the pandemic of loneliness that existed before but was worsened by Covid-19.

## Project description

Community Impact Network (CIN) is a national support network for befriending services across Ireland led by ALONE. We provide resources and training to new and well-established befriending and support services. Training options are available to both the staff of services and their volunteers.

Befriending Network Ireland was established by several befriending organizations in Ireland in 2015. The network was set up to increase collaboration amongst befriending services and to enable the sharing of information and resources. Today, more than 60 befriending organizations from across Ireland are members of CIN.

Community Impact Network provides support and guidance to new and already-established befriending services in various ways:

- Coordinator Training covering the setting-up and management of a befriending service
- Core Volunteer Befriending Training for services that would like their volunteers trained
- Peer-to-peer shared learning opportunities in person and online to ensure rural access
- Support and Case Management training
- Service Set-up Basics training
- CIN also holds an annual national seminar highlighting areas of interest and relevance to the befriending sector

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

The CIN provides services that reduce isolation across the whole country, community by community. The crisis of loneliness is lifted one person at a time, but we can help support the networks by making them more sustainable, sharing the learnings through the network, collating data through the network, and providing training and skills required.

## Lessons learned

Some services already exist and can be networked together to provide a stronger solution for more people that will provide an impact greater than the individual parts. By helping the network grow stronger you help older people who are experiencing isolation and loneliness to improve their quality of life, health, and well-being.





## Kyrgyz Republic

June - November 2021

Public Association "Resource Center for the Elderly" (RCE)



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# Strengthening civil society participation in the COVID-19 response at national and local levels

## Emergency to which the project/activity responded

This project aimed to protect senior citizens in the Kyrgyz Republic from contracting COVID-19, tackle the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on all aspects of the lives of senior citizens, and strengthen their resilience to future emergencies. The project aimed at enhancing access to services for older persons and at protecting their health.

## Project description

The Project Goal: To engage and empower older persons and their communities in developing resilience to emergencies with the focus on the COVID-19 pandemic, using a self-help model in seven regions of the Kyrgyz Republic.

### The main objectives:

- Ensure access of older people, including older people with disabilities, to health care, protection from domestic violence, and social protection services at the local and national levels.
- Exchange of best practices in emergency response in the context of COVID-19 prevention with international networks and community groups.
- Promote behavior change in older people by building capacity to prevent infectious diseases, including COVID-19, and participate in the COVID-19 emergency response by disseminating available information materials.
- Provide psychological and social support to 500 disabled and non-disabled older people through the hotline and home visits.
- Capacity building of community leaders through mutual learning and exchange of experience of elderly people in response to the pandemic and community resilience.

Coverage and beneficiaries: 33 Self-Help Groups (SHGs), 4 Small Community Councils (SCCs) and 10 Federations of Self-Help Groups (FSHGs) were involved in seven regions of the Kyrgyz Republic.

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

The project covered 7 regions of the Kyrgyz Republic involving several government agencies, such as the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Ministry of Health and Social Development of the Kyrgyz Republic, and local authorities. RCE existing community engagement structures were used to empower older people to respond to emergencies.

## Lessons learned

- People in the regions have little understanding of the importance of vaccination.
- It is necessary to continue supporting and developing the Council of Paramedics as a volunteer structure to provide support to EP as liaison between health care institutions and EP.
- It is necessary to improve the capacity of the seniors through trainings and platforms on active longevity, access to health services, vaccinations, prevention of NCDs and Coronavirus infection.
- It is necessary to promote active longevity and active aging among the seniors.
- It is necessary to develop the Advocacy Plan in each region of the Project to form the basis of the Roadmap "Healthy Aging in Kyrgyzstan".





## Wiazowna, Poland

March 2020 – March 2022



Ministry of Family and Social Policy

<http://senior.gov.pl/>  
<https://www.gov.pl/rodzina>



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# „SENIOR+” versus coronavirus – good practices

## Emergency to which the project/activity responded

The project responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. In view of the restrictions introduced across the country with regard to the organisation of activities in social assistance institutions, the stationary activities of most „Senior+” Day Care Centres and „Senior+” Clubs (established under the „Senior+” Multiannual Programme, co-financed from the state budget) were suspended. Despite this, „Senior+” Day Care Centres and Clubs continued with some of their activities in an „alternative” form - online.

## Project description

Employees of these centres are in permanent contact with the participants, by organizing various types of activities for them (e.g. tailoring workshops – sewing masks, art or painting workshops), providing seniors with puzzles, crosswords, books, newspapers, etc., as well as helping in doing shopping, medical visits, or handling official matters. Older people can also expect the support of the employees of the centres, including psychologists, in the form of frequent telephone or Internet contacts. Seniors also receive one hot meal a day, delivered directly to their place of residence.

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

An example of good practice is the Senior+ Day Care Centre in Wola Karczewska (Commune of Wiązowna). The facility carried out many forms of activity for the seniors: equipment for exercising at home (rubber bands, balls, steppers, poles, stationary bikes, games); workshops entitled „Stay at home – on-line culinary classes”; online dance activities – „Stay at home – dance with the seniors from the Senior+ Day Care Centre”; online sewing and design course; online art activities; horticultural therapy – plants were obtained as part of the „Phototherapy with seniors from the “Senior+” Day Care Centre” campaign. The plants were then delivered to garden lovers who were the wards of the institution. The seniors planted flowers and ornamental shrubs in their home gardens; bibliotherapy and exercises to improve brain functions: as part of a donation, press, books, rebuses, crosswords, sudoku were obtained. The wards of the institution also took part in charity campaigns organised by the seniors during the pandemic: „Magic Book” – the seniors and volunteers received texts of: fairy tales, poems and stories that they read at home. The created footage has been properly edited, and then, in the form of recordings, it was sent to kindergartens, schools, hospitals and the “Promyczek” Home Hospice for Children. The links were also made available to all residents; „Masks for the Residents of the Commune of Wiązowna” – both the employees and seniors sewed masks, which were then sent to the oldest residents of the commune.

## Lessons learned

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that it is necessary to develop the digital competences of seniors who, in the face of forced isolation, had to use ICT means for handling the significant part of everyday life matters. In turn, the feeling of isolation and loneliness growing in them should be counteracted by implementing projects aimed at activating and integrating the senior environment. It is also important to continue actions to improve the financial situation of older people, in particular those with the lowest income, in order to provide them with economic security and enable them to live in dignity.

Another important area concerns the continuation and implementation of activities aimed at improving the functioning of the social assistance system, and in particular improving the potential and efficiency of social assistance institutions by expanding the availability of social services addressed to older people. Actions related to deinstitutionalization can play a key role here, enabling the transition from institutional to local care.

In addition, any new actions taken at central and regional level should be designed with the participation of older people and based on a comprehensive diagnosis of the needs and resources of this group. Actors from different sectors should be involved in their implementation, so that initiatives for the benefit of elderly people become a common interest of a given local community.





**Bosnia and Herzegovina,  
North Macedonia,  
Serbia**

**November 2021 - March 2023**

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www.humanost.org.mk

# Strengthening local health systems in the Western Balkans and improving the health of older people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic through the transfer of know-how on mobile care and support

## Emergency to which the project/activity responded

During the COVID-19 pandemic, when older people are one of the most affected population, their socialisation, activities and opportunity for healthy ageing is of utmost importance for their lives. Following this idea, we identified relevant partners in three Western Balkan countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Northern Macedonia) working in the field of healthy ageing in order to reach as many beneficiaries as possible.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all the Healthy Ageing Centres and Day Centres for Older People, as well as hundreds of their service recipients, have been unable to maintain regular centre activities. Due to the duration of this situation, many older people are feeling the psychological effects of isolation. The mental health of this population was equally affected in all three countries where the project implementation is planned. As participation in the current activities in the healthy ageing centres requires physical presence, many older people who have disabilities or mobility problems cannot participate in these activities. Almost none of the Healthy Ageing Centres in the three countries offer online activities and there are many older people who do not have IT equipment and are not digitally literate.

## Project description

The aim of this project is to sustainably strengthen the local health systems in the Western Balkans with the support of the Austrian Federal Ministry for Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection. The focus is on older people and people with disabilities, who are most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the training of professional mobile caregivers on site, on the one hand, and through the inclusion of older persons in society on the other, the health of this particularly vulnerable population group will be strengthened sustainably and beyond the duration of the project.

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

- Transfer of know-how from Austria in the preparation of training curricula for mobile care workers and for volunteers to support older people in the project countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Northern Macedonia).
- Regional networking of Healthy Ageing Centres and promotion of regional cooperation to maintain regular activities of Healthy Ageing Centres through available online tools.
- Training older persons in digital literacy and enabling access to online courses of the Healthy Ageing Centres, implemented with the involvement of staff from the Healthy Ageing Centres as well as volunteers.



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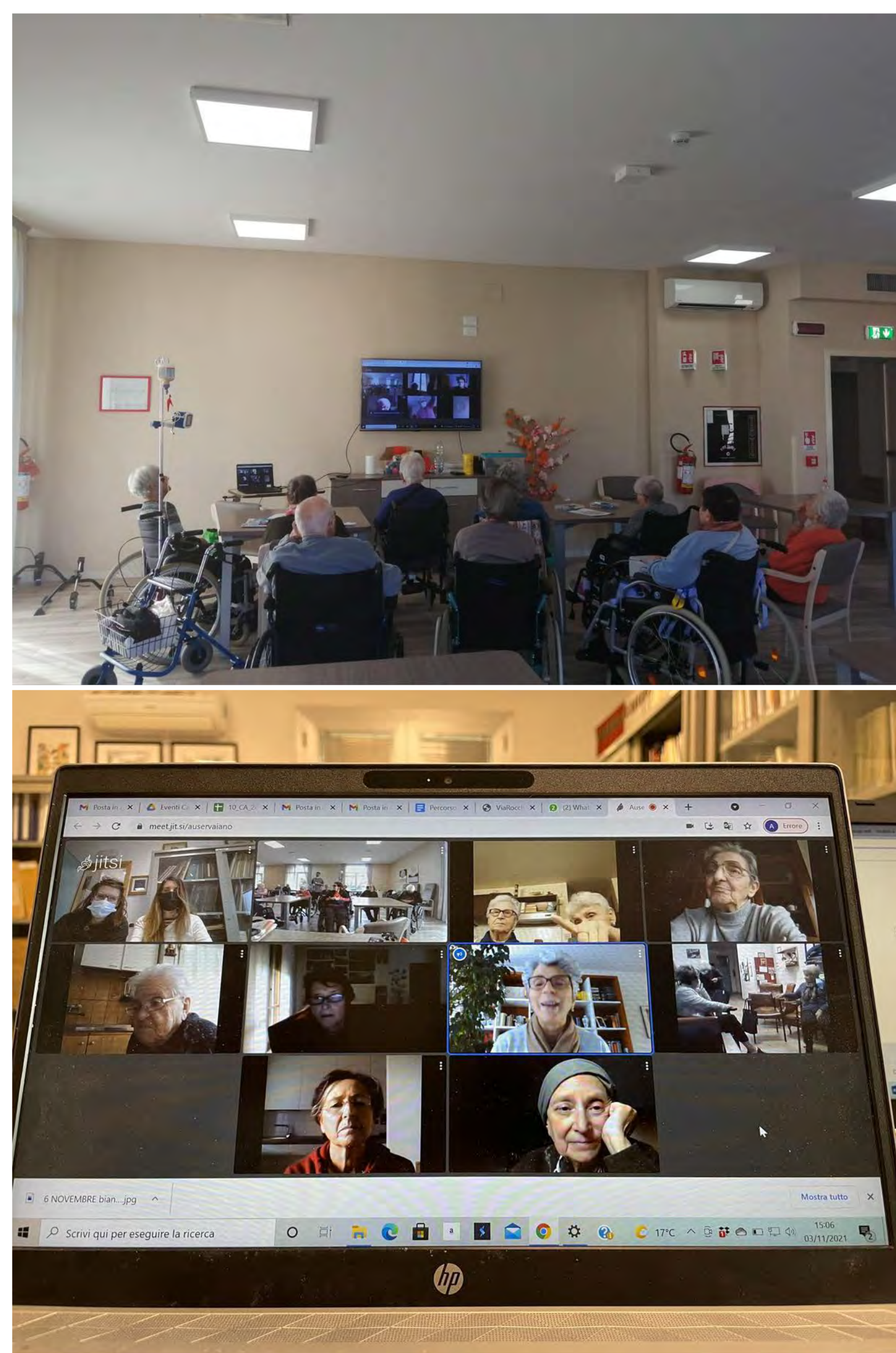
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# Amico web

**Emergency to which the project/activity responded**  
COVID-19

## Project Description

The socio-health situation during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic has forced many people into isolation. This happened in particular for older and frail people. Our associations were closed and it was not possible to organize activities for them as we used to do. During that period, we kept in touch with them over the phone to make them feel less alone, to give them a little company and courage. We realized how much human relations were important for them. They were often isolated in their homes or in the protected facilities, often without human contacts even with their families.

Many older people at home and residents in protected facilities experienced a psychological decline and depression. We decided to re-evaluate the digital medium to allow people to communicate in the absence of physical meetings. We were aware that it would not be easy for older people unfamiliar with digital media, but we considered this a great challenge and decided to try. We gave tablets to older people at home and taught them how to use them, and how to connect with a very simple way of connecting (always the same). In the protected facilities, digital equipment was activated and they used the same simple connection method.

We prepared a programme of activities: creative, artistic, cooking, storytelling and culture workshops for engaging older people living at home and in facilities, and we started offering these remotely via digital means.

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

The project has been important to support social inclusion, recover broken human relationships even if at a distance and to fight loneliness and also to continue the possibility of stay together and doing activities together. The activities that were proposed were of different types. The storytelling workshop stimulated the reactivation of positive feelings and emotions with the aim of giving confidence and forgetting the reality that was being lived. The "Sweet gymnastics workshop" includes activities carried out through simple movements such as getting up, turning, standing, or walking performed in a gentle way, applied with breathing techniques that help to acquire greater awareness of your body, this workshop helped to move older people who lost the ability to move when they were isolated at home or in the facilities. The other offers were cultural and practical: some workshops wanted to increase their cultural background, the knowledge of the historical and natural territory, keep the intellectual sphere active, keep the possibility of visiting the various museums with nice videos. All this to reactivate the cultural interests and manual skills that risked being lost during isolation. This project has also allowed older people to get familiar with digital means and appreciate the usefulness of these tools in reducing the distance with the outside world and with their families.

## Lessons learned

This project made it possible not to interrupt social relations, to alleviate depression, and it allowed in the facilities to relieve the sense of isolation and to maintain relations with the external community. The possibility of doing the proposed activities has allowed the elderly and frail people to experience this difficult moment less alone and to continue to cultivate interests and skills that they risked losing in isolation.

**Vaiano, Prato, Italy**

**February – December 2021**

**Auser – La Sartoria Vaiano**

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## Georgia

June - December 2020

UNFPA Georgia

[www.georgia.unfpa.org](http://www.georgia.unfpa.org)



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# Assisting the Georgian Government and local communities in mitigating the impact of COVID-19

## Emergency to which the project/activity responded

COVID-19

## Project description

The United Nations Country Team in Georgia joined efforts to tackle the COVID-19 emergency with the "leaving no one behind" principle at the centre. One of the objectives was to strengthen the resilience of communities through targeting the older population, raising their awareness, and supporting the continuity of health and social services. The UNFPA Georgia Country Office focused on the vulnerable older population and with the funding from the UN Multi-Purpose Trust Fund (MPTF) and the German government, has achieved the following results:

- In partnership with the Georgia Red Cross Society (GRCS) a **total of 5,461 older persons under the poverty line living alone in the targeted 10 most vulnerable municipalities of Georgia were reached** by home care visits and supplied with food and hygiene parcels and information materials on COVID-19 risks and prevention issued in Georgian, Azeri and Armenian languages to cover ethnic minority population.
- **All 11 state-funded Long-term Care institutions for older persons (LTC) were reached (about 250 beneficiaries) and supplied in two rounds with protective gear and disinfectants for personnel as well as with informational materials, supporting the continuation of the provision of care to institutionalized older people.**
- **A total of 683 older people living alone in rural settlements** with remote neighbourhoods and without any communication means, **received basic mobile phones with** the preinstalled Georgian Red Cross hotline number enabling them to cope in an emergency situation if needed.
- **The standards for prevention and management of COVID-19 in residential institutions and community care homes for older persons and persons with disabilities (the Standard) and the monitoring tool to ensure the adherence to these standards were elaborated, approved by the Ministry of Health, and operationalized through online training;**
- **the video and audio materials promoting health safety and protection measures from COVID 19, were developed and aired through the national and regional radio and broadcasted through the regional TV channels (14 channels); in addition, up to 36,000 people were reached through social media.**

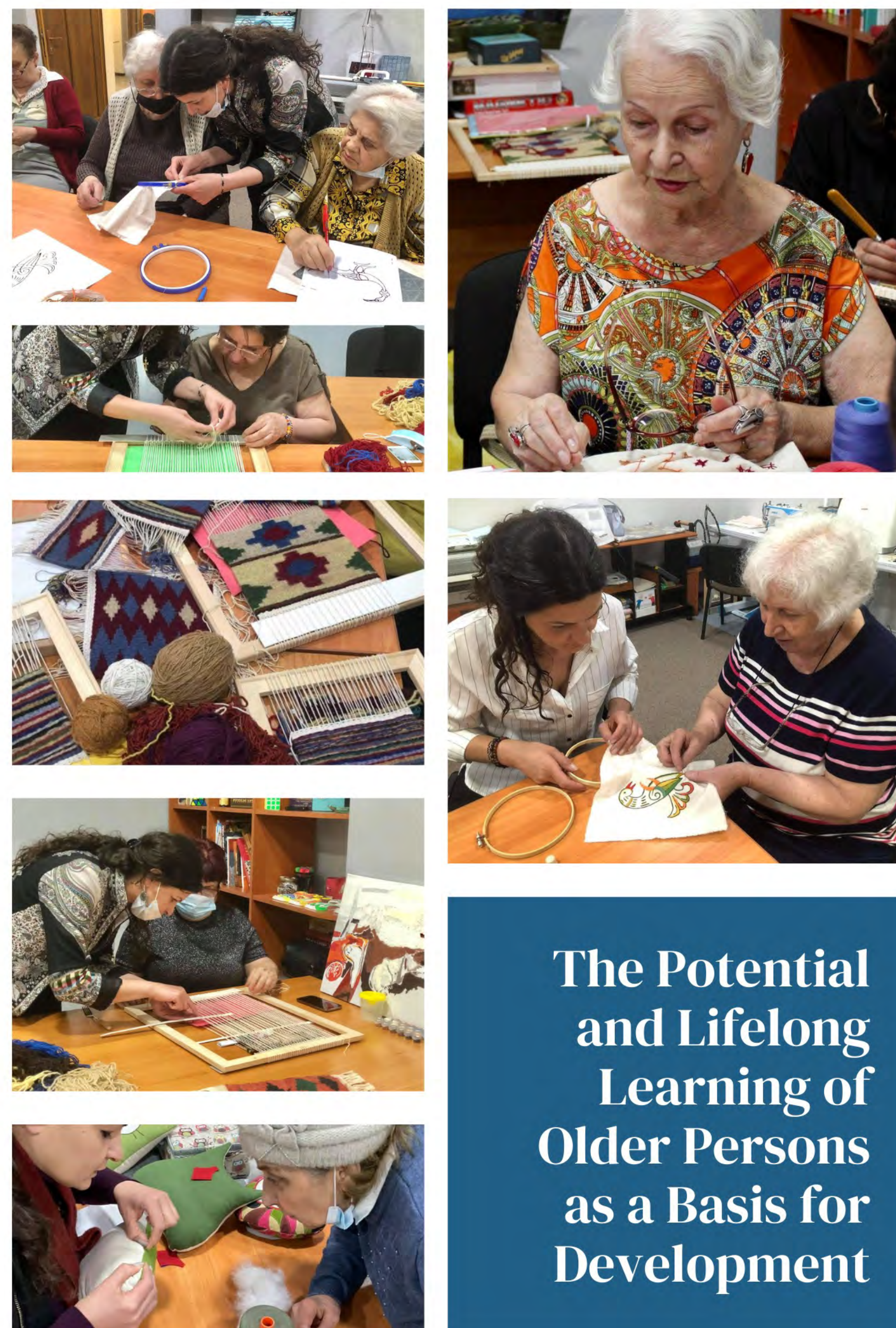
## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

Thanks to this project, all the 11 LTCs continued operation without any interruption as well as the beneficiaries – older people living alone in 10 municipalities - got support in hard times, thus achieving minimum impact of COVID19.

## Lessons learned

UNFPA conducted an assessment (<https://georgia.unfpa.org/en/publications/situation-retired-older-persons-living-alone-under-poverty-line-during-covid-19>) in four initially targeted municipalities. Based on the research findings, recommendations were elaborated for improved protection of older persons. It is also worth mentioning the partnership established by UNFPA with the GRCS was instrumental, as well as the collaboration with the State Care Agency under the Ministry of Health that ensured improved infection prevention.





**Yerevan, Armenia**

**April – August 2022**

**Association of Healthcare and Assistance to Older People**  
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[www.gerontology.am](http://www.gerontology.am)



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# The potential and lifelong learning of older persons as a basis for development

## Emergency to which the project/activity responded

COVID-19 changed older people's daily routines, the care and support they receive, their ability to stay socially connected and how they were perceived. Older people were being challenged by requirements to spend more time at home, lack of physical contact with other family members, friends and colleagues, temporary cessation of employment and other activities; and anxiety and fear of illness and death – their own and that of others. It is therefore important that we create opportunities to foster healthy ageing, recovery and development. One of the most obvious messages conveyed by the project is that the potential of older persons is a powerful basis for future development as they represent a great asset to society. The learning process and active interaction with each other foster brain health and helps overcome the isolation impact of COVID-19.

## Project description

In this project, 25 older persons aged 65+ learn national types of embroidery and carpet making. After developing the mentioned skills, they will share their knowledge and experience with school children and children from an orphanage.

The main objectives of the project are: combating isolation, promoting and maintaining mental and psychological health, independence and activity of older adults, discovering and realizing the potential of older persons through continuing education, and highlighting the role and the contribution of national culture in the achievement of the sustainable development goals and preservation of cultural heritage, fostering financial stability for older persons, and a positive change in public attitudes towards older adults and their abilities.

The project is being implemented by the Association of Healthcare and Assistance to Older People in its healthy ageing innovation centre "Longevity Centre", which is a unique professional day centre in Armenia for people aged 65+. The roots of the project go back to January 2021, when UNFPA Armenia Country Office confirmed it as a priority project. In 2022, it is being continued with the financial support of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia.

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

The project creates a physically and psychologically safe environment for older people, in which they can positively socialize and foster their mental health.

## Lessons learned

The COVID-19 pandemic affected all the groups of the population, but older adults suffered more because of their age and multiple health conditions. They are affected by the negative impact of COVID-19 and can develop mental health problems. It is of paramount importance to create new opportunities for recovery.





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**Germany**

**2021**



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Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der  
Seniorenorganisationen**  
[www.bagso.de](http://www.bagso.de)



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Rome 15-17 June 2022

**Poster exhibition on Older  
Persons in Emergency Situations**

# Respecting and promoting the rights of long-term care residents during COVID-19

## Emergency to which the project/activity responded

The activities were developed during the public health emergency provoked by COVID-19 when long-term care institutions had to implement strict measures to protect their residents and staff from infection. At the same time, these measures led to drastic restrictions to the basic rights of their residents. Residents and their representatives were often not involved in decisions on infection control measures.

## Project description

The German National Association of Senior Citizens' Organisations (BAGSO) opened a call for best practices of long-term care institutions that made efforts to guarantee their residents' participation during the pandemic to be awarded with the "GERAS Price". The Jury awarded long-term care institutions that found ways of guaranteeing autonomy and participation in decision-making of their older residents. The award's main objective is to ensure that in future crises the voice of the residents and their relatives are heard and included in the decision-making of long-term care facilities.

One of the award-winning institutions held monthly home advisory board meetings and a weekly exchange between the home management and the home advisory board chairperson. The jury of the GERAS Price also highlighted the establishment of an in-house radio, through which the residents were informed and could receive greeting messages. The offers of the social and accompanying services were successfully aligned with the residents' demands and needs. For example, wishes such as park and balcony concerts were fulfilled.

Other activities related to the pandemic: BAGSO also commissioned a legal opinion piece to investigate human rights violations faced by older persons living in residential care facilities. It focused on restrictions on visiting and leaving the institutions during the pandemic. The opinion piece concludes that the Basic Law was violated to a large extent. It highlighted that visiting bans for dying persons and for palliative care units (even in ordinary hospitals) violate human dignity and are therefore unconstitutional. The legal opinion piece is used for national advocacy activities.

Furthermore, BAGSO published regular press releases and position papers pointing to human rights violations during the pandemic.

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

The activities in the facilities contributed directly to engaging older persons in the institutions' response to COVID-19. The award, accompanied by communications and media activities, contributes to sharing best practices and to raising awareness about the issue.

## Lessons learned

- The GERAS Price 2021 helped to identify avenues to counteract human rights violations against older persons living in institutions, even in public health emergencies.
- Joint actions with our member organizations increased the impact of public statements regarding specific COVID-19 measures.





## Kraków, Poland

Since 2015

Emergency response March 2020 - present

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# Kraków's support of older persons during the time of COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine

## Emergency to which the project/activity responded

Already before the COVID-19 pandemic, Kraków city had a policy aiming to support older citizens (PASIOS 2015-2020 Programme). In March 2020, when the pandemic created an emergency situation, Kraków was prepared for supporting older persons living in the city in various ways. Since February 2022 (due to war in Ukraine) Kraków and its citizens have also been actively engaged in helping refugees.

## Project description

- **Kraków for seniors:** the internet portal "Kraków for seniors with information about undertakings and events targeted at the older citizens; a permanent column in the city's biweekly portal KRAKÓW.PL, edited and prepared by the President's Plenipotentiary of the City of Kraków for Senior Policy.
- **Online classes during the pandemic** - various activities such as gymnastics, virtual walks around Kraków and museums, art, IT, and language classes organized by Senior Activity Centres (CAS).
- **Municipal Healthcare Program „Healthy Kraków”** - 7666 free flu vaccinations for people over 65; campaigns for encouraging older citizens to take the vaccination against SARS CoV-2 and the vaccination delivery service for people over 70 years of age who have difficulty getting to the vaccination point on their own.
- **Let's act together! Promotion and enhancement of intergenerational activities** - seventh edition (April 2022) of the competition aiming at integrating students and older people and promoting cooperation between them.
- **Phone to Older Person** - ad hoc action with Jagiellonian University's students during the first weeks of lockdown (TelefonUJ)
- **ASYSTENT 85+ project** - improving the quality and standard of living of Krakow's residents by providing them with care and support by assistants who visit their charges at home and help them perform basic everyday activities, as well as accompanying them in tasks that require moving outside their place of residence in Krakow; extension of the project in the fourth quarter of 2021 - inclusion of people 70+ with disabilities.
- **Support for Ukrainian seniors** – inviting people 60+ from Ukraine in daily Senior Activity Centers (CAS) activities to get to know the neighbourhood and obtain important information for everyday life in the city; engaging older citizens in voluntary activities (food and medicine collection ) aimed at migrants from Ukraine.

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

During COVID-19 to protect older persons from being infected, doing and delivering shopping, while also being in touch with seniors to prevent their social isolation. Senior Activity Centres (CAS) became the places where older persons could be engaged in various social, but also voluntary activities.

## Lessons learned

- 1) benefits of supporting older citizens' activity through the city's measures benefit for all citizens (regardless of age)
- 2) showing that older citizens can be active (a fight against ageism) and how they can postpone/delay time of being inactive due to their health behavior.

Additionally, since March 2022 – the City of Kraków is a partner in the project City & Co: Older Adults Co-Creating a Sustainable Age-friendly City (ERA-NET Cofund Urban Transformation Capacities (ENUTC).





## Poland, Ukraine

February 2022 - present

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# Polish Third Age Universities support older persons during wartime in Ukraine

## Emergency to which the project/activity responded

24th of February 2022 was the first day of the Russian attack on Ukraine. It was an extremely serious tragic emergency situation for older persons in Ukraine and also for those who decided to escape to neighbouring countries like Poland.

## Project description

Due to the crisis war situation, the aim of activity of the National Federation of Associations of Third Age Universities was to organize as soon as possible effective support/help which could be delivered to older persons in regions/cities of Ukraine where Third Age Universities are located and to organize help for those seniors who stayed there/did not leave their homes and to those who escaped from Ukraine to Poland.

## Activities include:

- Organizing the transport of food, and medicine with other organizations
- Organizing financial support via established bank account and received funds were transferred to similar Third Age Universities in Ukraine and their leaders (Lviv)
- Supporting accommodation for older refugees from Ukraine in a few places in Poland (around the headquarters of the Federation, in Nowy Sącz, in Muszyna in the Małopolska region, in collaboration with The Polish Union of Seniors and social partners/organizations from Germany)
- Creating links/networking of those who could offer the help/support (including local policymakers)

## Project beneficiaries include:

- About 100 older persons in Lviv who are members of the local Third Age University
- Refugees from Ukraine who were accommodated in Muszyna gmina/Małopolska

## Results of the project include:

- 1) Support to older persons living in Ukraine who have difficulties to survive due to lack of basic goods/food/medicines
- 2) Support to older refugees from Ukraine who came to Gmina Muszyna and Nowy Sącz in Poland,
- 3) Universities of Third Age in Poland (over 50 in the Federation) in their locations offer ongoing support for refugees in Poland

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

The coordinated and cooperative activity of Universities of Third Age could effectively react and contribute to protecting older persons in Ukraine, via everyday constant contact by mail/phone, it gave a chance to be direct, quick, and tailored to the needs of seniors.

## Lessons learned

- In such a difficult unpredictable crisis situation because of war the well-known networks between Third Age Universities could be the first and effective measures of helping/supporting
- A lot of additional support was offered and the Federation of Third Age Universities could play a key role as organizer/leader of this activity focusing on older persons
- Trust and confidence that help will be delivered to those who are left – great grateful words (i.e expressed by a representative of one of the TAU from Lviv)





## Melbourne & Sydney, Australia

Mid 2020 – Mid 2021

**National Seniors Australia & Australian Unity**  
nationalseniors.com.au



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# Assertive COVID outreach to senior Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse communities

## Emergency to which the project/activity responded

COVID-19 lockdowns caused widespread social isolation in Australia in 2020-21. Many older Australians became isolated from loved ones and communities, including people they depended on for supplies, home assistance, personal care, and emotional wellbeing. The problem was particularly acute for older Australians who are members of new and emerging culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. Such communities have not had time to build community infrastructure and support organizations, rendering their members highly vulnerable. Making it worse, many publicly available Australian COVID materials were very poorly translated, and older CALD community members are rarely comfortable contacting government services.

## Project description

We developed an assertive outreach program to support seniors in new and emerging CALD communities during the pandemic. We employed a team of Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) to contact older people directly and offer assistance. All CLOs were active volunteer leaders within their communities, with track records of caring for their people and getting things done. They had community knowledge and contacts so could find the older people most in need. Most CLOs were seniors themselves.

The initial aim was to provide COVID information in community languages and culturally appropriate emotional support. This expanded to other kinds of support when conversations with CALD seniors made the extent of need apparent. CLOs helped people apply for government-funded aged care, disability services, and welfare benefits. They assisted with urgent housing, food, and medical attention needs. They recruited professional help for those suffering under elder abuse, domestic violence, and financial scams. Many seniors we contacted had no idea that these government and community support systems even existed.

CLOs did more than provide information. They also helped seniors fill in forms, decipher official correspondence and make COVID vaccine appointments. They translated, interpreted, and advocated on seniors' behalf to ensure their needs were met. They attended meetings with seniors and wrote instructions for seniors on how to manage these tasks for themselves.

In all, the programme employed only a small team for one year but produced big results. The first five months was a pilot with a single CLO serving one community. We received funding to expand to six communities during the second half. In Melbourne, we supported communities from Filipino, Afghan, Spanish speaking (Central and South American) and Chin (Burma) backgrounds, and in Sydney, communities from Cambodian and Arabic speaking backgrounds. Each community had one Community Liaison Officer assigned, plus a Team Leader in each city. Despite these limitations, we directly contacted and assisted nearly 2000 older community members, communicated via more than 12,000 phone calls and emails, and made over 1500 supported referrals.

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

Through our direct contact, we built CALD seniors' knowledge of government and community services. We empowered family members and other community leaders to provide support for their seniors. In the immediate term, we saved thousands of lives with COVID information. In the long term, we helped build communities' capacity to access the assistance they are entitled to.

## Lessons learned

Older Australians from new and emerging CALD communities need culturally competent assistance in community languages to meet many ongoing, chronic, and urgent needs. The best way to assist is by paying community leaders who already provide that help voluntarily and building their capacity. Assertive outreach programs help seniors survive and communities thrive.





**Lisbon, Portugal**

**May 2020 – February 2021**



**SANTA CASA**  
Misericórdia de Lisboa



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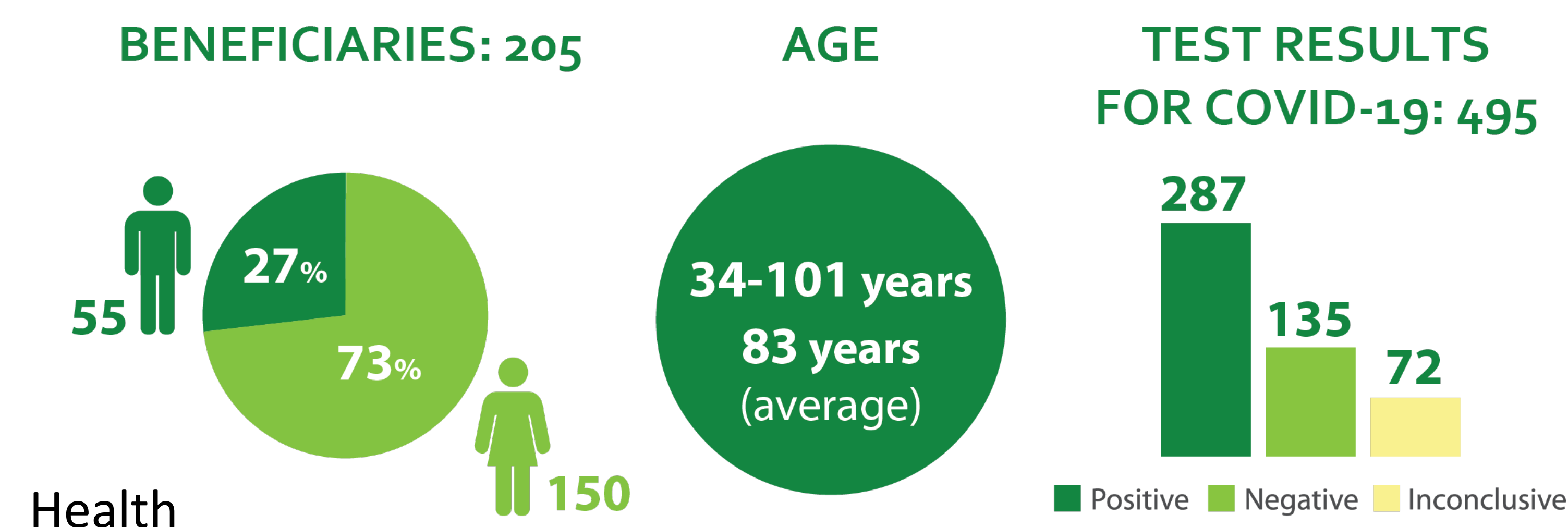
# Emerging projects in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in Lisbon: Recovery Units

## Description of emergency to which the project/activity responded.

In response to COVID-19 pandemic, and to the appeal of the Portuguese Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security, Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa created, in partnership with the Lisbon City Council, the Recovery Units. The work carried out within the scope of this pioneering response is due to the availability of Santa Casa professionals and all the partner entities involved. Above all, we believed that this would be the best way to provide care for the most fragile people, within the absolute respect for the condition of each individual.

## Project description

The recovery units were designed as a supportive response to the population and a collaboration with the public authorities with the purpose of caring for and tracking people in prophylactic isolation and/or in a situation of a confirmed COVID-19 infection. Aiming to guarantee the separation of beneficiaries in comfort and safety, these units ensured the procedures recommended by the Directorate-General for Health, in order to cut the COVID-19 transmission chains and control the infection.



Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa managed the Recovery Units, namely the availability of vacancies/beds, and was responsible for the discharge process. The management model was based on the Participation Principle between the entities/partners in dialogue with the several internal (Recovery Units Coordinators) and external partners (Lisbon City Council - Civil Protection; Social Security Institute; Authorities), thus guaranteeing the most appropriate responses and services to each person's condition.

Having fulfilled the mission for which they were created, it was with a sense of accomplishment that Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa closed the Recovery Units, conscious of the importance of the service provided and the valuable wealth of knowledge that resulted from it.

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

Literacy or health promotion is seen as a crucial tool for the prevention of communicable diseases, and it is paramount to the improvement of society.

Considering the partnerships set out and always with a teamwork logic in mind, it was possible to speed up the best responses to the challenges posed by the pandemic with the utmost respect for the recommended procedures.

## Lessons learned

It was possible to expedite best responses to challenges posed by the pandemic, in respect for the procedures recommended by the Health Delegation, that aimed to break the chain and prevent infection.





## Lisbon, Portugal

April 2020 - October 2021



**SANTA CASA**  
Misericórdia de Lisboa



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# Emerging projects in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in Lisbon: Preventive Intervention Teams

## Description of emergency to which the project/activity responded

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the appeal of the Portuguese Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security, Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa created, in partnership with the Lisbon City Council, the Preventive Intervention Teams. The work carried out within the scope of this pioneering response is due to the availability of Santa Casa professionals and all the partner entities involved. Above all, we believed that this would be the best way to provide care for the most fragile people, within the absolute respect for the condition of each individual.

## Project description

The Preventive Intervention Teams were created in April 2020, to prevent disease, promote health and good practices and protect the residents and professionals of institutions, and social or health support establishments. These teams carried out COVID tests for professionals and residents of institutions, and social or health support establishments in Lisbon municipality.

There were many moments of deep learning that translated into an adjusted adaptation to the new reality, considering all challenges presented and a firm search for the best answers. The distinctly pedagogical work made it possible to clarify doubts, to adapt and improve procedures in loco, as well as promote good public health practices.



After showcasing the results and presenting the reflections and recommendations drawn from it, we can legitimately recognize the gains of the action.

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

The literacy or health promotion is seen as a crucial tool for the prevention of communicable diseases and it is paramount to the improvement of society. Considering the partnerships set out and always with a teamwork logic in mind, it was possible to speed up the best responses to the challenges posed by the pandemic with the utmost respect for the recommended procedures.

## Lessons learned

This experience also results in an opportunity for learning and should translate into an institutional change, in order to increase excellent care and services with the purpose to guarantee respect and dignity to every person

	1 <sup>ST</sup> PHASE	2 <sup>ND</sup> PHASE	3 <sup>RD</sup> PHASE
PERIOD	6th Apr–30th Jun 20	6th Oct 20–22th Jan 21	24th Mar–15th Oct 21
TESTS	5785	3817	10 067
INSTITUTIONS TESTED	103	82	94
RESULTS OF TESTS %	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>93,9% negative</li> <li>3,9% inconclusive</li> <li>2,2% positive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>94,7% negative</li> <li>1,2% inconclusive</li> <li>4,1% positive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>99,6% negative</li> <li>0,1% inconclusive</li> <li>0,3% positive</li> </ul>
SPECIFICITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preventive Visits</li> <li>Testing ensured by the internal capacity of the institution or by the nursing team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Testing ensured by the internal capacity of the institution or by the nursing team</li> <li>COMVIDas Association</li> <li>Vaccination Situation Point</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Testing carried out at the laboratory sampling points</li> <li>COMVIDas Association</li> </ul>
	 <b>TOTAL OF TESTS FOR COVID-1</b> <b>19 759</b>	 <b>TOTAL OF INSTITUTIONS TESTED</b> <b>279</b>	





## Czech Republic

2020 - 2021

**Association of Universities of  
the Third Age of the Czech  
Republic (AU3V)**

au3v@seznam.cz  
www.au3v.cz



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# Unconventional teaching of seniors during the COVID-19 pandemic

## Description of emergency to which the project/activity responded

The activity was held in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected many areas of human activity, including education. The aim was to support seniors involved in lifelong learning within a University of the Third Age in abnormal times.

## Project description

During the COVID-19 pandemic, contact teaching of senior education at the Czech universities had to be provided only online. Thanks to the Association of Universities of the Third Age of the Czech Republic (AU3V), selective online lectures created at individual universities were provided to all older students.

The photo shows a University of the Third Age student, Mrs Jitka Kolářková, who was involved in online teaching provided by Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic. This type of teaching was also implemented by other workplaces in the Czech Republic and showed how it is possible to adapt effectively and safely to an emergency situation.

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

Teaching in the online environment has its specificities. Most importantly, this type of teaching has been implemented at all. It helps seniors maintain their mental balance, engages them in interaction with peers, and arouses their interest in what is happening in society. Although not in person, but via online tools, seniors were able to continue to be involved in this leisure activity, which many consider an essential part of their active lives.

## Lessons learned

The transfer of teaching at the University of the Third Age to the online environment has shown that a common activity like teaching can continue, even with pandemic restrictions. Thus, a way was found to continue lectures and seminars even in lockdown times using modern technology. In other words, it was a response to an entirely new and extraordinary situation that was particularly threatening, especially for the older people. Online teaching has strengthened the digital competencies of seniors and developed their knowledge in this area. This initiative aimed to support this part of the population under challenging times.





## Portugal

March 2020 – April 2022

**FCT** Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia

Teresa Martins  
SFRH/BD/132328/2017 | COVID/BD/152442/2022

**APRe!**  
Associação de Aposentados Pensionistas e Reformados

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# Digital switchover to combat ageism in times of the COVID-19 pandemic

## Description of emergency to which the project/activity responded

The violation of older people's rights, particularly those concerning citizenship rights, has been a constant feature throughout the pandemic. Defence of those rights became a global emergency alongside the pandemic emergency itself.

## Project description

APRe! was founded in 2012 as a civic association, with the mission of demanding decent retirement conditions, following a severe financial crisis. As the pandemic exposed situations of flagrant violation of older people's rights, APRe! was driven to take an active part in their defense more comprehensively. Isolation and radical reduction of face-to-face contacts forced our association to quickly adapt to new ways of working, to be able to pursue its mission.

**Main strategic objectives:** 1. To continue and strengthen contact with its members; 2. To be an accessible and reliable channel of information on issues affecting older people; 3. To remain active and assertive at national and international level.

**Operational goals:** 1. To strengthen presence on social networks; 2. To set up online communication channels and strategies; 3. To reinforce contact with the media; 4. To increase engagement in international dynamics for the rights of older people.

**Activities:** Regular meetings through online platforms; Reactivation of APRe!'s Facebook group; Renewal of monthly online Newsletter "Notícias APRe!" with strong cover messages, drawing attention to the real situation of older people; Webinars Cycle "Accept the invitation to talk about..." (key current topics by experts); Interventions in the media; APRe!'s public positions; International participation as a member of European and UN organizations.

**Beneficiaries:** Members of APRe! and older persons in general.

**Results:** FB group: 1000 members regular daily interactions; monthly Newsletter sent by email to all 4493 members and published on website and FB page; 31 appearances on national media channels; 16 press releases and in-depth analysis of 5 strategic policy documents reported in the national press; at the international level, 13 webinars/conferences, 9 meetings and 8 written contributions to international documents. The number of online APRe! followers has significantly increased, reflecting adherence of older people to this approach to communication. The association is currently called upon to take part in the public space more frequently.

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

The recognition of credible and reliable provided information showed that older people can have a voice expanded into the public space. The presence of APRe! in monitoring Government measures during periods of State of Emergency was very significant in denouncing and preventing the advancement of discriminatory measures towards older people. Bridging with other people and institutions, both national and international, enabled by online communication, has increased the ability of older people to be heard in Portugal.

## Lessons learned

Plasticity and adaptability; Development of digital skills; Intergenerational learning and cooperation; Access to reliable and early-warning information on age discrimination. Strengthening networks has provided more knowledge and tools to counteract prejudices raised or unmasked by the pandemic Covid-19.



# New Horizons for Seniors Program

## Description of emergency to which the project/activity responded

COVID-19 Pandemic

## Project description

- The New Horizons for Seniors Program (NHSP) is a grants and contributions funding program that empowers seniors to share their knowledge, skills and experience with others in order to enhance seniors' social well-being and community vitality. Since 2004, the NHSP has funded more than 33,500 projects with a total investment of more than \$667 million.

- While the COVID-19 pandemic has been difficult for most people, it has had a significant impact on older adults. To support seniors during the pandemic, the NHSP introduced flexibilities and new investments to help address the issues seniors were facing:

### *Introduced flexibilities*

- In the spring of 2020, the Government of Canada provided flexibilities to adapt then-current project activities to support seniors impacted by COVID-19. Organizations used this funding to provide immediate and essential services to seniors. The approximately 2,800 community organizations, representing close to \$50 million in existing funding, could use their funding to deliver services to seniors in the community such as providing tablets to help seniors stay connected to their loved ones.

### *New investments*

- In March 2020, the Prime Minister of Canada announced an additional \$9M in funding through the NHSP to the United Way Centraide Canada, a national not-for-profit organization who was able to act as an intermediary to disperse funds to community organizations to help isolated, vulnerable seniors cope with the impacts of the pandemic. These investments helped to provide essential services to seniors such as the delivery of groceries and medications, meal preparation, and transportation to appointments. More than 900 projects were supported through this funding.
- In May 2020, the Government of Canada announced an additional investment of \$20M to support community-based projects that reduce isolation, improve the quality of life of seniors and help them maintain a social support network during the pandemic. More than 1,000 projects were funded.

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

- Projects focused on providing practical supports to seniors during the pandemic such as grocery delivery, phone check-ins and transportation to appointments. Additionally, many projects supported seniors in accessing technology and training on how to use it, and programming to help prepare older adults for future emergencies.

## Lessons learned

- Working closely with partners, the NHSP was able to quickly respond to the needs of older adults and provide support to vulnerable seniors through this difficult time.
- Partnering with a national not-for-profit organization who was able to act as an intermediary to disperse funds to community organizations allowed funding to be delivered quickly and to go where it was needed most.
- Many funded organizations were able to pivot their activities to online and virtual programming, allowing seniors to stay socially connected with their peers and communities.

## Canada

March 2020 - Present

New Horizons for Seniors  
Program - Canada.ca

Programme Nouveaux Horizons  
pour les aînés - Canada.ca



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SMART DATA DRIVEN  
SOLUTIONS FOR  
PERSONALIZED EARLY  
RISK DETECTION AND  
INTERVENTION



**Puglia, Italy**

**2021 - 2023**

<https://www.gatekeeper-project.eu/region/puglia-italy-it>

<https://www.sanita.puglia.it/web/ares>



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# GATEKEEPER, smart data-driven solutions for personalized early risk detection and intervention

## Description of emergency to which the project/activity responded

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) - Old age and comorbidity were identified as two prime determinants of COVID-19 mortality: the experimentation of new devices and methodologies based on Artificial Intelligence and Big Data represents a new approach to deal with the social and health emergencies.

## Project description

GATEKEEPER is a European Multi Centric Large-Scale Pilot on data-driven solutions for personalized early risk detection and intervention. The main objective is to enable the creation of a platform that connects healthcare providers, businesses, entrepreneurs, and older citizens and the communities they live in, in order to originate an open, trust-based arena for matching ideas, technologies, user needs, and processes, aimed at ensuring healthier independent lives for the ageing populations and improving the quality of life, also during an emergency. The target population consists of about 10.000 patients and citizens: 1.100 patients 65+ and 9.000 citizens 55+.

Research lines: The Puglia Pilot coordinates three main experimentations. The first one uses wearable technologies to monitor participants' glycemic levels and other fundamental parameters such as sleep and movement factors. The second one consists in the continuous monitoring of health parameters related to Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, Type 2 diabetes mellitus, heart failure, hypertension, and support for the patient's self-management and empowerment. The third one is enrolling 9.400 citizens that will take part in a research-based on wearable technologies and apps to build a trusted ecosystem that will mix monitoring of health and personal parameters with the provision of information and content on wellbeing to find out if precious advice delivered as e-coaching and health literacy can improve the way of life of the target population.

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

Big Data Analytics techniques are exploited by the project to address risk stratification and early detection, based on lifestyles analysis, including pattern recognition for the improvement of public health surveillance and for the early detection of cognitive decline and frailty; data mining for inductive reasoning and exploratory data analysis; Cluster Analysis for identifying high-risk groups among older citizens. In the above cases timely intervention is provided through AI-based, digital coaches, AI assistant based structured conversations, consultation, and education.

## Lessons learned

The first lesson learned regards the close relationships between community participation and health-related quality of life. After the end of the experiments, the data collected during the observational period will be linked with data extracted from the regional healthcare databases. This will be done in order to conduct a cost-utility assessment (primary end-point) and to assess other secondary endpoints regarding the feasibility and acceptability of large-scale use of technical devices with older adults. The pilot study could demonstrate that the health coaching provided older adults with knowledge of nutrition and exercise, raised their awareness of well-being in terms of daily meals and regular exercise, providing an alternative to maintain a healthy lifestyle amidst a global pandemic.



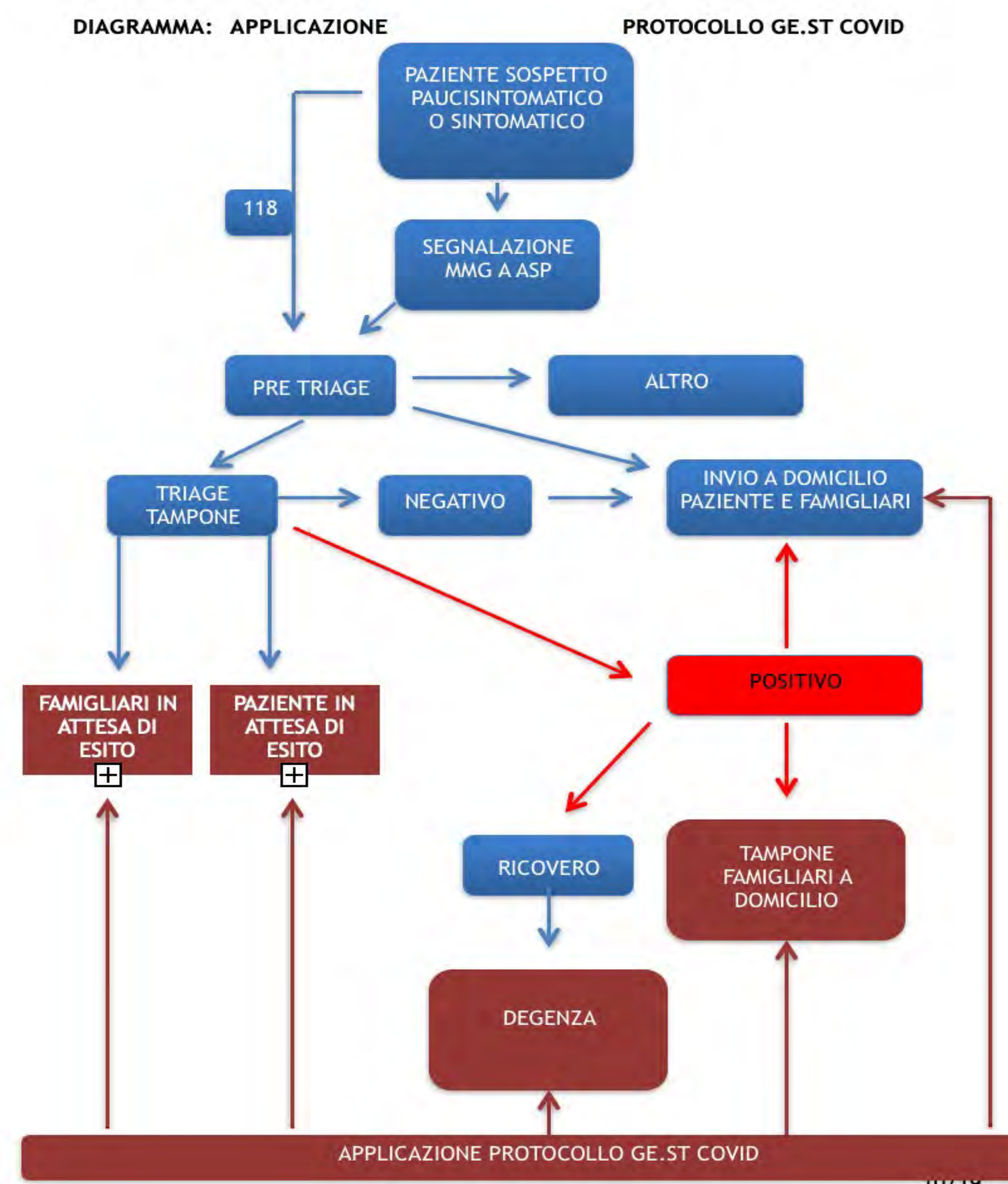
# Stress management in COVID-19 patients and their families

## Description of emergency to which the project/activity responded

COVID-19 but it can be adapted to many other situations

## Project description

The objective was to provide support, in the province of Ragusa, to groups whose mental health has been particularly vulnerable as a consequence of the pandemic, including people with pre-existing health conditions and older people. The initiative relates to the elaboration/implementation of a protocol linked to conscious breathing, the GE.ST COVID protocol. The relationship between mind, well-being, and breathing is now widely recognized and it is known that 5 minutes of correct deep/conscious breathing per day can positively modify the functions of the heart and brain and of the entire cardiorespiratory system. Fifty operators, among physicians /nurses/social-health workers from the Emergency Department/Infectious Diseases, were trained to use the protocol in patients with suspected COVID-19, especially older people. The methodology was verified through Focus Groups and Nominal Group Technique for the evaluation of the results. From the observation grids, it was found that the protocol is considered effective. It can be successfully applied where conditions are optimal. Qualitative analysis of data showed that in 80% of cases the three clinical parameters considered improved: The number of breaths per minute decreased; oxygenation improved; the heart rate normalized. The patient's state of well-being improved. The application of the protocol appears to be encouraging for preventing secondary complications related to anxiety and fear. "One shot multiple targets" could be the slogan as it is a "global", "complete" practical protocol of intervention on psychological discomfort and breathing difficulties which has a preventive/therapeutic/rehabilitative type of care purpose and that can be used by different operators: healthcare professionals/general practitioners/social workers/ psychologists. At the same time, it can be addressed to patients and their families.



Ragusa, Sicily, Italy

Mid 2020 – Present

Provincial Health Authority  
of Ragusa, Sicily, Italy

*roberta.arnone@asp.rg.it*  
website *www.asp.rg.it*



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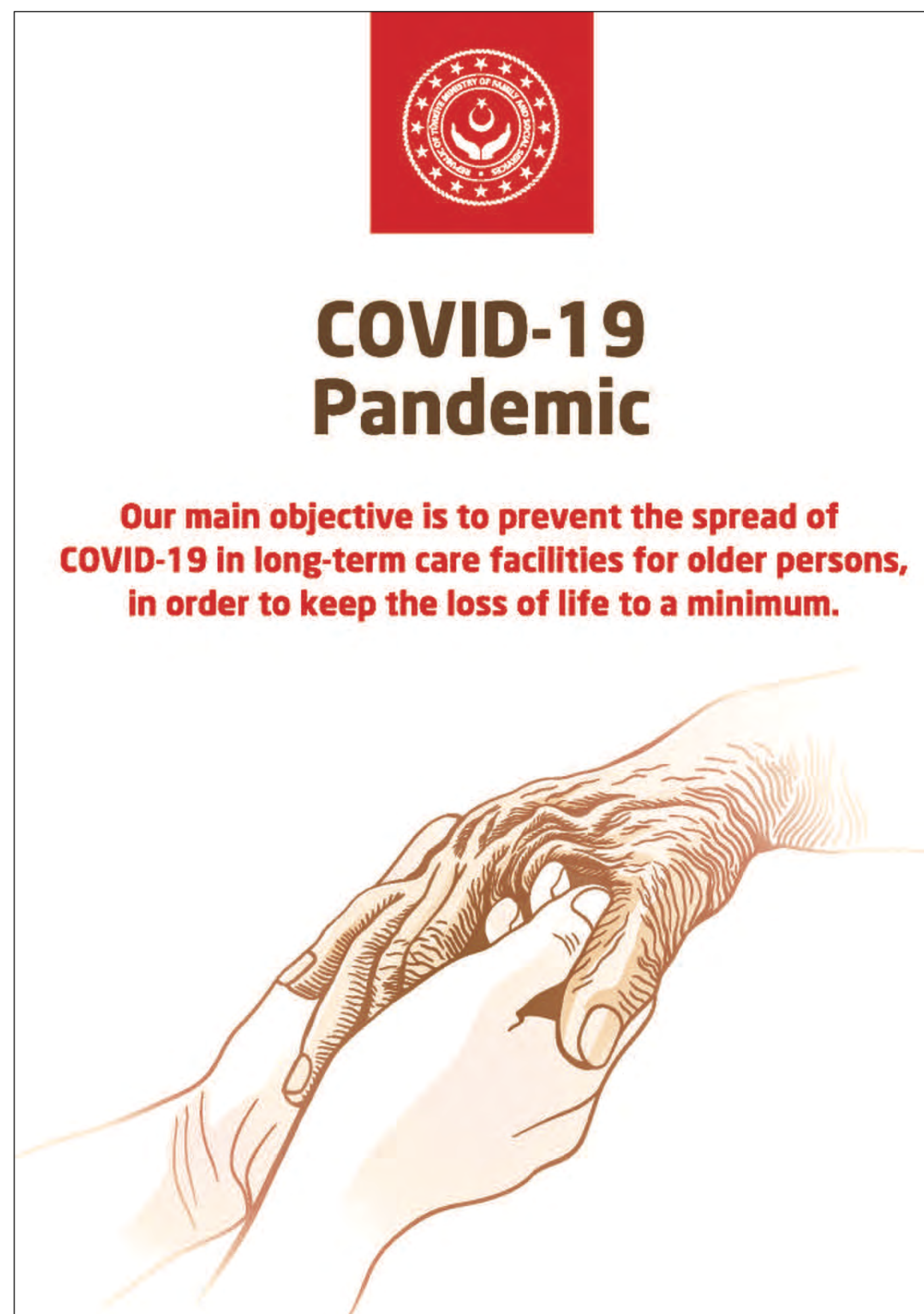
## How the activity contributes to the protection of older persons in emergencies

During the COVID-19 period, the population most at risk of a severe form of lung disease and with a higher mortality rate include people over 60 years of age because of different pre-existing pathologies. The greatest threat in patients with COVID-19 comes from serious respiratory complications/bilateral pneumonia/respiratory failure and this is truer in older people where, usually, there is a gradual decline in functions. If the psychological situation is compromised, by anxiety and stress, in the acute phase one of the immediate consequences of the acute psychological disorder affecting the patient (COVID/non-COVID) is the SURFACE HYPERVENTILATION that contributes to the worsening of cellular suffering. Proper conscious breathing not only rebalances the O2/CO2 ratio with immediate cellular benefit, but has a positive effect on anxiety and stress control, especially in older persons.

## Lessons learned

Certainly, the protocol, still in use in Ragusa Province since 2020, can be easily duplicated both at the national/international level with some considerations. The Protocol GE.ST COVID is neither independent from other procedures, in fact, it is articulated with the existing protocols both hospital (pre-triage, triage, admission, discharge) and territorial (home treatment) already in use, nor does it replace preventive/therapeutic activities in place. It is particularly effective in cases of low severity both on the anxiolytic effect and on the improvement of vital parameters, such as O2 saturation, when applied to patients of all ages (tested from 6 to 70 years).





## Turkey

January 2020 - Present

**Ministry of Family and Social Services  
General Directorate of Services for Persons  
with Disabilities and the Elderly**

<https://www.aile.gov.tr/eyhgm-en/>



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# COVID-19 measures in long-term care facilities for older persons

## Emergency to which the project/activity responded

COVID-19 pandemic

## Project description

The main objective of the activities is to prevent the spread of COVID-19 cases in long-term care facilities for older persons and to keep the losses to a minimum. The beneficiaries of the activities are the older residents of long-term care facilities, their families, and the staff of the facilities. Before March 2020, the date of the first COVID-19 case in our country, protective and preventive measures were taken for long-term care facilities for older persons in January 2020.

Restrictions were introduced to all long-term care facilities for older persons except force majeure. Staff and residents working in the facilities were informed about the COVID-19 pandemic and ways of protection. It was ensured that older persons returning from abroad underwent a 14-day quarantine period in specially equipped home-type social service units if they did not have their families nearby. COVID-19 testing procedure has been started for all of the personnel in the shift changes and the older persons in the long-term care facilities for older persons. Symptoms of residents such as fever and respiration were monitored at least four times a day at intervals of 6 hours. Residents were restricted from moving out of the facility «unless necessary». The social isolation units (room/floor/building) were decided and separated. All of our facilities were instructed to switch to a 7-10-14 day fixed shift system. Facilities have been provided with an allowance to stock enough hygienic and medical supplies. From the beginning of the pandemic, updated guides have been prepared and communicated to facilities with new stages required by the process.

As one of the top priority groups in the vaccination application that started in January 2021 in our country, residents of long-term care facilities for older persons were vaccinated. A total of 87.120 people in long-term care facilities, including staff and residents, were vaccinated.

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

The timely and effective implementation of the measures taken for our facilities has ensured that the death numbers and rates associated with COVID-19 in our nursing homes are relatively low compared to the rest of the world. Thanks to the comprehensive measures taken, the rate of those who died in long-term care facilities affiliated with the Ministry of Family and Social Services among the total deaths caused by COVID-19 has remained very low. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the necessity of protecting and improving the rights of older persons has been emphasized once again globally.

## Lessons learned

COVID-19 is spreading very fast, especially in public living environments such as long-term care facilities, and the mortality rates are higher for individuals who are above the age group of 65 and who have chronic diseases. For this reason, in order to prevent the spread of the virus in long-term care facilities, it is necessary to update the measures taken according to the course of the process and to implement them effectively and quickly.





# ‘If not now, when?’ - humanitarian sector fails to address the needs of older people

## Emergency to which the project/activity responded

The proportion of the population aged 50-plus in fragile countries, where conflict and disasters are more likely to occur, is expected to rise from 12.3 per cent (219.9 million) in 2020 to 19.2 per cent (586.3 million) in 2050.

## Project description

In November 2020 Age International and HelpAge International launched the report ‘*If not now, when?*’ that includes findings of needs assessments carried out interviewing 8,883 people aged 50 to 80-plus affected by natural disasters, conflict or socio-economic crises in 11 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. Of the older people surveyed:

- 98% had at least one health condition yet a quarter (26%) could not access health services
- 39% could not reach aid distribution points independently, including 55% of those with a disability
- 72% of those with walking difficulties did not even have a walking stick
- 75% of those with difficulty seeing did not have eyeglasses
- 20% said they had no access to shelter
- 64% did not have enough to eat
- 77% had no income
- 25% had no access to safe drinking water
- 62% had no access to bathing facilities (36% had no access to handwashing facilities and 35% could not get to a toilet )
- 36% said neglect and isolation and denial of resources, opportunities or services were risks for older people

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

To meet older people’s basic needs, all humanitarian actors and agencies should put into practice the following:

1. **Provide leadership** - Proactively recognize and respond to the rights and needs of older people, the risks they face, as well as their capabilities and contributions. *They must:* Include older people in funding guidelines, criteria and programme portfolios; advocate for the rights of older people within the international humanitarian system; invest in capacity building and designate focal points.
2. **Mainstream older people’s inclusion** - Take responsibility for responding to the rights and needs of older people, alongside specialist agencies. *They must:* Integrate age into existing gender, disability and protection mainstreaming policies and action plans; incorporate the Humanitarian Inclusion Standards for Older People and People with Disabilities into humanitarian policy, guidelines and training; invest in programming to uphold older people’s rights and meet their specific needs.
3. **Strengthen data collection and analysis** - Make efforts to improve data collection, analysis and disaggregation on the basis of age, as accurate information is essential to uphold humanitarian principles and basic human rights. *They must:* Routinely collect, analyze and use data on age, sex and disability throughout the programme cycle including by interviewing older people directly as part of needs assessments; require funding proposals and reporting to include an analysis of the risks older people are facing and the extent to which humanitarian aid is supporting them.
4. **Consult older people** - Meaningfully consult older people and promote their participation and empowerment. This is essential to ensure humanitarian interventions are effective in responding to older people’s rights and needs. *They must:* Invest in programming that gives older people a stronger voice in humanitarian responses; provide accessible methods for older people to feedback on the humanitarian assistance and adapt programmes according to data, analysis and feedback.

## Lessons learned

Humanitarian responses are not meeting older people’s basic needs and blanket approaches to delivering aid are preventing many older people from accessing even general services.

**Ethiopia, Jordan, Malawi,  
Mozambique, Pakistan,  
South Sudan, North East  
Syria, Tanzania, Venezuela,  
Yemen, Zimbabwe**

**November 2018 – December 2019**

**HelpAge International**  
<https://www.helpage.org>

**Age International**  
<https://www.ageinternational.org.uk>

**HelpAge Italy**  
<https://www.helpage.it>



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**Poster exhibition on Older  
Persons in Emergency Situations**





Photo: © Rido/Adobe Stock

## European Union

2021-2022

**Eurofound, Hans Dubois**

Hans.Dubois@eurofound.europa.eu

<https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2022/covid-19-and-older-people-impact-on-their-lives-support-and-care>



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# COVID-19 and older people: impact on their lives, support and care

## Emergency to which the project/activity responded

COVID-19

## Project description

This study focuses on older people's lives during the COVID-19 pandemic and how they were impacted by governments' and societies' responses in terms of their physical and mental well-being, social interactions, work, finances, and their need for and use of support services, healthcare and long-term care. The report analyses EU survey data and draws on information provided by the Network of Eurofound Correspondents, including national survey results and information on policy measures and initiatives.

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

The study aims to understand the impact the pandemic situation has had on older people's lives, which measures mitigated that impact, drawing lessons for the future, including how to protect and engage older people in responding to emergency situations.

## Lessons learned

- In the EU, people of all ages became more at risk of mental health issues and loneliness during the pandemic, but the impact was particularly severe among young people and people aged 80+. In summer 2020, 18% of 80+ felt lonelier than before the pandemic and one-third never left their home.
- Reduced physical activity during the pandemic increased with age. In summer 2020, 41% of people aged 50–79 and 46% aged 80+ went out for walks less often than before the pandemic. Smoking, unhealthy eating and alcohol intake increased for some and decreased for others, with healthier trends among the oldest age groups.
- Older people faced decreases in income less often than younger people, but also saw their financial situation improve less often. Pensions were a stable income source. Expenditure increases caused problems for low-income groups in particular.
- Early in the pandemic, the unavailability of services and fear of catching the virus were dominant reasons for unmet healthcare needs. Subsequently, reasons already common before the pandemic, such as waiting lists, lack of reachability and unaffordability, increased. Low-tech (phone) e-healthcare facilitated access to healthcare, but 56% of people aged 50+ who needed a consultation had a face-to-face consultation because they preferred it to the available e-healthcare options. An e-healthcare consultation did not fully meet the needs of 49% of people aged 50+ who used one.
- There was a shift from formal to informal long-term care and from residential care to home care. There was an increase among men aged 50–64 providing informal care, but it remains particularly common for older women to provide such care. Many informal carers provided more care, with additional pandemic-related challenges. Older people's support needs were often addressed by partners and children during the pandemic, posing challenges for people without an informal support network.

## Policy pointers:

- Ensure well-developed, flexible welfare systems, health and social services and civil society to enable rapid responses when needs emerge. The pandemic has shown that most support is built on pre-existing structures. Improve fairness and prevent stereotyping by targeting needs rather than age groups. Avoid overemphasising employment and active ageing, acknowledging that progress relates more broadly to quality of life.
- Facilitate use of information and communications technology, including in primary care and to support carers, but acknowledge its limitations, especially for the provision of more demanding forms of care. Ensure access to mental health services, and address causes of mental health problems, such as social isolation and income insecurity. Enhance social interaction by including older people in meaningful activities, designing public spaces that facilitate interaction and investing in home and community care. Facilitate the positive individual habits taken up during the pandemic, and improve people's living environments.





## Tirana, Vlora, Durres, Rrogozhine and Gjirokaster municipalities, Albania

### 2021 - Present



<https://albania.unfpa.org/en>



### Poster exhibition on Older Persons in Emergency Situations

# Setting up a model of integrated health and social care for older persons during COVID-19 in Albania

## Emergency to which the project/activity responded

The proportion of older people in Albania, and consequently the number of those in need of care among them, has grown faster than in any other country in Southeast Europe. It is estimated that 25% of people aged over 65 and 45% of those over 80 years old in Albania have at least one disability. The country did not inherit any system of care for the older persons from the communist past and there remain important gaps and unmet needs. Health services and social care assistance also remain divided and poorly coordinated. The emergencies of the earthquake in November 2019 and especially the following COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 stretched the unmet needs to the point of crisis.

## Project description

The Ministry of Health and Social Protection of Albania, in collaboration with a number of local governments in the country and supported by the 'Leave No One Behind' Joint Programme through the UNFPA Country Office, launched in early 2021 an intervention aiming at building a model of integrated care and long-term care for older persons. Integrated care aims to use all local resources and strengthen the resilience of communities.

Five municipalities were selected for developing the model: Tirana, Vlora, Durres, Rrogozhine and Gjirokaster. **Tirana** is the capital of Albania and has the biggest population and it had already started to pilot integrated care model earlier. **Rrogozhina** is a town with very limited resources in central Albania; **Durres** is the second biggest city in the country, heavily affected by earthquakes, **Gjirokaster** is a medium-sized municipality with the highest proportion of older persons in the country and close to the border. **Vlora** is the third most populous city.

Interventions followed a comprehensive approach based on International Standards (WHO):

- Analyses of needs and capacities for care for the older persons at the local level;
- Development of an instrument adapted to local conditions based on Integrated Care for Older People (ICOPE);
- Development of a set of rules, criteria, definitions, practices, flowcharts, stakeholders, responsibilities, indicators, and instruments;
- Development of a training manual for key persons;
- Meetings, workshops, and training with the participation of all government and non-government actors
- Supporting, recreational, and intergeneration solidarity activities in partnership with the CSOs sector.

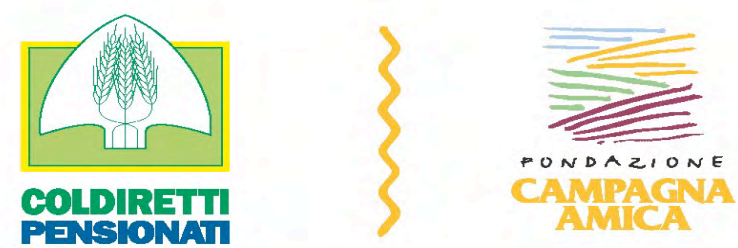
## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

Older people's organizations and other grassroots associations at the local level were involved and empowered during the process. Their contributions were coordinated with those provided by other public care providers. An important aspect of the intervention was the acknowledgment and support for informal carers. New models of support for older persons (such as the development of a database of older persons, their needs and specific issues related to individuals, periodic monitoring of their wellbeing, and respite care for them when needed) were introduced. The interventions are still in the early phases and UNFPA and partners plan to continue by providing more coaching for local authorities and long-term care providers as well as advocate for changes in the social and health care system to ensure better support for older persons that is sustainable and well budgeted for.

## Lessons learned

While at the central level healthcare and social assistance are well-coordinated, at the local level the institutions and services remain highly fragmented. Involvement of local governments with their units for needs assessment and referral was key to assure integration with more traditional health care for the provision of home visits and long-term care.





Italy

2020 - 2021

**Federpensionati Coldiretti**

<https://federpensionati.coldiretti.it/>

**Campagna Amica**

<https://www.campagnamica.it/>



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# “Suspended spending” initiative provides top-quality food to assist older persons in need

**Emergency to which the project/activity responded**

COVID-19

## Project description

To date, over 6 million kg of fruit, vegetables, cheeses, cold cuts, pasta, tomato preserves, flour, wine, and 100% Italian oil, of high quality and zero kilometres have been donated by the farmers of Campagna Amica to needy families. This is the "Suspended Spending" initiative promoted by Coldiretti and Campagna Amica. Citizens who shop in the markets and farms of Campagna Amica spread along the Peninsula can decide to donate food and drinks to families most in need. This is based on the model of the Campania custom of "suspended coffee", when at a bar you pay a coffee for a customer that will come later. In this case, however, it is fruit and vegetables, but also pasta made with 100% Italian wheat, cured meats and vegetables from the earthquake-stricken areas of Lazio, Marche, Abruzzo and Umbria, extra virgin olive oil with Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), pecorino cheese of Sardinian shepherds and other food “Made in Italy” that the farmers of Campagna Amica will deliver free of charge to needy families on the Italian territory. Beneficiaries are above all those nuclei of the new "invisible" poor who, precisely because of the sudden worsening of their economic condition, have not yet been integrated into the "official" circuits of assistance. Among these are many older persons who today have difficulties because they can no longer be helped by their families that in turn can no longer make it to the end of the month.

"Suspended Spending" has become an important social tool especially in these last years of the pandemic, with many people who have found themselves in difficulty. This is the largest free food offer ever made by Italian farmers to help overcome the economic and social emergency caused by the spread of the coronavirus and the necessary containment measures.

*"With the suspended spending we wanted to make a tangible sign of the solidarity of farmers towards the weakest sections of the population most affected by economic difficulties", explained the president of Coldiretti Ettore Prandini in underlining that "our goal is to ensure that this experience is not limited to this occasion but becomes a structural phenomenon. Thanks to this experience, also with the contribution of public and private companies, over 6 million kg of fruit, vegetables, cheeses, cold cuts, pasta, tomato preserves, flour, wine and 100% Italian, high quality and zero kilometres, donated to the most needy during the crisis generated by the pandemic, have already been collected".*

Solidarity initiatives are all the more important considering that the number of “new poor” who need food assistance has increased by more than a million as a result of the economic and social crisis caused by the pandemic and the consequent loss of job opportunities. A social catastrophe unprecedented since the post-war period against which it is important to guarantee interventions also in terms of food to those in difficulty.

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

Assisting older and isolated people with the provision of top-quality food.

## Lessons learned:

Importance of being close to older people in times of greatest difficulty and the great emotion of gratitude received from them.





## Republic of Moldova (25 localities)

December 2020 - Present

[www.fundatiamoldcell.md](http://www.fundatiamoldcell.md)



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# Digital skills connect generations

## Emergency to which the project/activity responded

The COVID-19 pandemic hit the most vulnerable hardest, with a bigger impact on older persons who faced discrimination and isolation. The devastating effects of the pandemic were determined by two factors. Firstly, older persons were already socially and economically vulnerable before the pandemic occurred. Secondly, the response to the pandemic did not tackle the particular needs of older persons. Also, in the context of physical isolation, access to a range of services and general access to information was possible mainly through digital means.

## Project description

The initiative takes place under the “Digital skills connect generations” project funded by UNFPA Moldova, Moldcell Foundation and Swiss Cooperation Office and carried out by HelpAge International Moldova in partnership with the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova, aiming to promote the digitalisation of older people and intergenerational dialogue, but also to show aspects of the ageing process in the Republic of Moldova.

Due to the pandemic, when everyone went online, older people who had no skills/connection/devices appeared to be absolutely disconnected from life. For example, in July 2020, during the peak of the pandemic in Moldova, over 13,575 older women and men were forced to stay in line at the Social Insurance House of Moldova to request pension revision, without any PPE. Also, in the context of physical isolation, access to a range of services and general access to information was possible mainly through digital means. Given the current demographic trends for an ageing population, improving digital skills of older women and men by engaging trained young people can boost both IT skills and intergenerational solidarity.

The older people have received smartphones with minutes and Internet traffic included, free of charge, and have participated in training on how to use them, and now they are going to put into practice acquired the skills and knowledge.

The programme includes a list of sessions for the older people that is delivered by the young volunteers from their village (HelpAge International) and Moldcell Foundation volunteers.

The sessions include: basics of a smartphone, how to use it, make photos/videos; how to use Internet, Google search, YouTube, Viber/WhatsApp; social media usage; access to e-government services (session conducted in partnership with the National Social Security Insurance House and e-Governance Agency); sessions with psychologist – showing that a phone can be a great help when you feel lonely.

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

The project built the digital skills of the most vulnerable older women and men to seek medical, social, informational and psychological assistance through intergenerational dialogue with young people. Lonely and isolated older people were provided with psychological and informational support, social and medical advice through a series of dedicated psychological sessions.

## Lessons learned

Limited access to technology and information is hindering chances of digitally connecting generations. This project allows connecting generations of older and young people. It is innovative in its approach, concept and strategy by addressing not only health and social protection of the most marginalized population groups but also facilitating intergenerational solidarity via mobilizing youth for community support. The project interventions have a strong human rights-based approach with a specific focus on the participation of right holders that is built in through innovation and partnerships.





## Italy

November 2020 - Present

[www.spazio50.org/webinar/](http://www.spazio50.org/webinar/)

# Zoom – I webinar di Spazio50

## Emergency to which the project/activity responded

Covid-19

## Project description

Addressing the health emergency linked to Covid-19 for 50+ has meant having to reflect and reorganize activities to continue cultivating the network of relationships. Both relations with the outside world and with collaborators and with the associative base - made up of about 330,000 members with an average age of 73 - were therefore invested by a constant effort to collect needs and criticalities throughout the national territory. In this sense, the use of digital media has proved indispensable. In fact, in November 2020, the "Zoom - I webinar di Spazio50" project was launched, a series of virtual meetings that, in full lockdown, tried to respond to the need for contact and sociality and the desire for entertainment that at that moment the Italians could not satisfy. This is why the service was offered completely free of charge and the webinar programming touched as many interests as possible: from physical activity to literary meetings; from psychology to medicine, up to appointments dedicated to tax questions or cinema. The calendar, in these two years, has been enriched with over 240 appointments for a number of spectators of over 12 thousand.

Furthermore, thanks to the compilation of questionnaires that the participants received after each meeting, it was found that the satisfaction with the webinars has been growing over time and 99.4% of the spectators stated that they would recommend the appointments of the schedule to a friend or an acquaintance. This result, fueled by public requests, meant that the project was permanently inserted within the activities of 50+ even when the containment measures became less stringent.

## How the activity contributes to protecting older persons in emergencies

The webinars represented an opportunity to respond to the need for sociability which, in the months of the lockdown, proved to be overwhelming. But they have also proved to be a valid tool to counter the grey digital divide. Both in the organization of each meeting, during which two assistants were designated to support spectators if they encountered technical problems, and in the management of content, as in the case of the cycle dedicated to technology. In several appointments, specific topics on technology such as digital identity, network security, the dangers of the web, the most useful apps, storytelling, etc. were addressed.

## Lessons learned

The pandemic has limited the opportunities for social exchange, at the same time accelerating the digitization process of the country and posing new challenges for those who, until now, have not had access to technologies or have not developed adequate skills. The result has brought many seniors into a condition of double exclusion: social and digital. The lack of socializing and meeting, in fact, has made everyday life more difficult; leisure and entertainment opportunities have often moved online, therefore, to a place inaccessible to those who have not acquired the right knowledge. It proved necessary to think of some solutions that could allow the elderly to adequately face the prolongation of the emergency situation, but also the future. It is becoming increasingly essential that institutions deal with digital literacy projects that start from the complex nature of the media and the specific characteristics of seniors. An objective that 50 & Più has set itself and which falls within those pursued at European and national level.



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## Estonia

August 2021 – October 2023

Krista Pegolainen-Saar

[www.seltsilised.ee](http://www.seltsilised.ee)

[krista@kodukant.ee](mailto:krista@kodukant.ee)



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# Implementing a collaborative model of volunteer involvement in the welfare system

## Emergency to which the project/activity responded

Public health emergencies (mental health, social exclusion, ageing, etc.)

## Project description

The project involves volunteers to help seniors aged 65+ and people with special needs. The overall aim is a more meaningful, emotionally vibrant and socially involved life to avoid the social isolation and loneliness of seniors or people with special needs. One of the goals is to extend the time living independently at home.

People with special needs include refugees from Ukraine to get all possible support and guidance at the community level.

The following assistance is provided to the target group:

- Offering company (e.g. conversation, reading, etc.);
- Being a companion in social activities and spending time with entertainment outside the home (e.g. walking, gardening or accompanying during doctor visits);
- Assisting with simpler household chores that the recipient of support would not be able to do on their own but can, even partially, with assistance (e.g. carrying a shopping bag when going grocery shopping);
- Assistance in activities offering mental and emotional satisfaction, for example preserving memories and stories;
- Visiting nursing homes to help maintain the healthy emotional and physical balance of seniors;
- Helping refugees to get organized in the community in collaboration with health services, schools, etc;

**Beneficiaries:** 1800 seniors and people with special needs, incl. the refugees from Ukraine.

**The expected result:** the project is aiming to develop a model, which jointly involves volunteers, local communities and local governments in welfare and care services.

**Financing:** The project is funded by the European Social Fund measure "Welfare services supporting participation in the labour market".

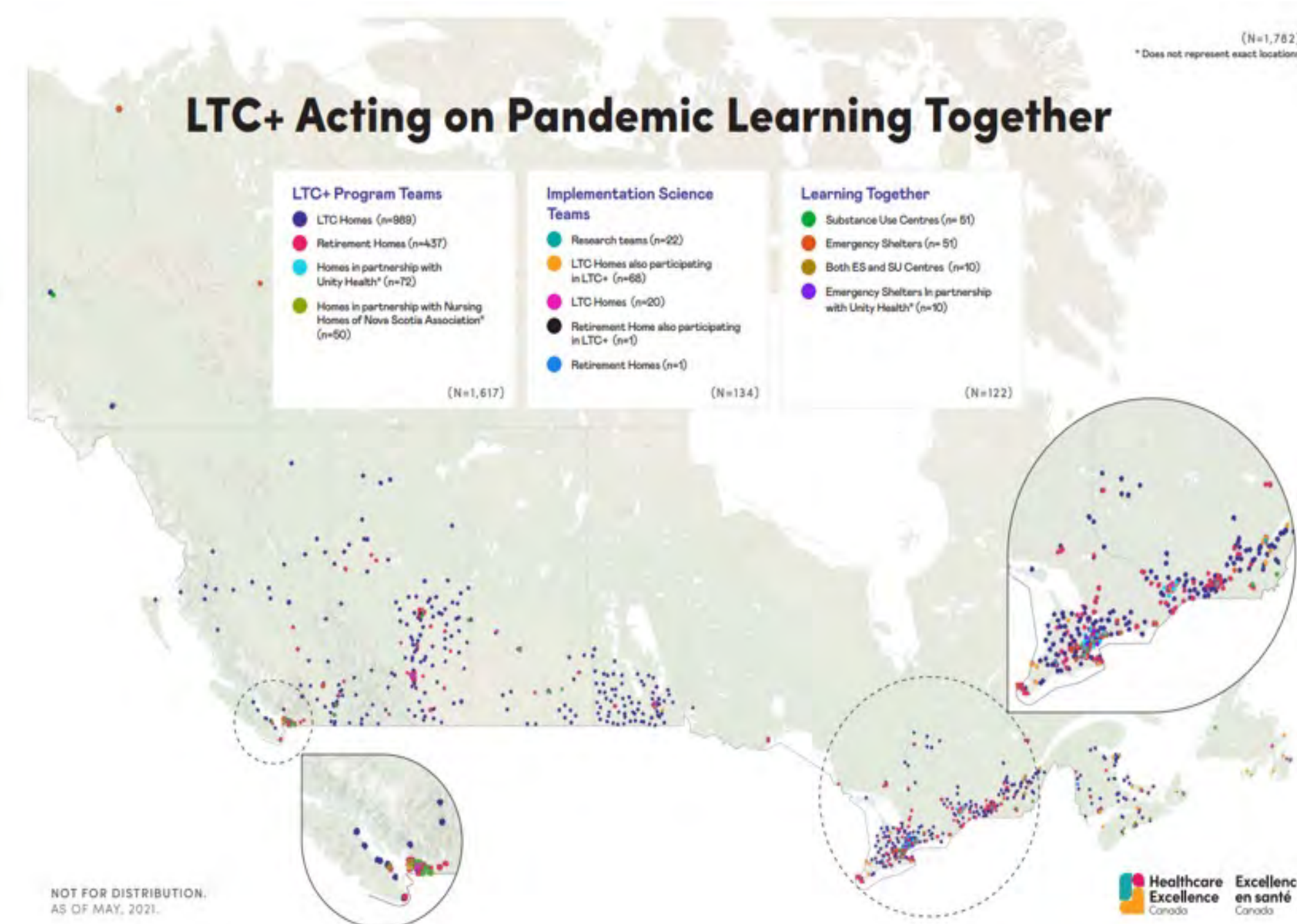
## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

Greater integration and community involvement helps improve problem detection in the social care system and prevent social isolation.

## Lessons learned

Volunteers have more opportunities to notice the person's need for assistance and report it to a social worker, thereby easing the burden on the local government when carrying out prevention work.



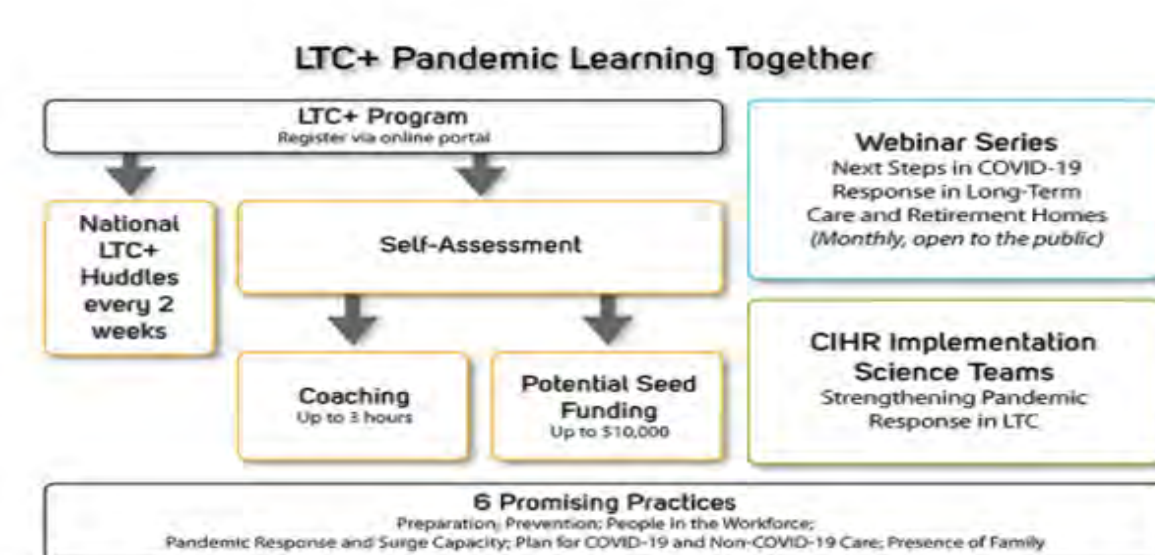


## Canada

August 2020 - Present

### The “Menu” of Offerings

Strengthen your Pandemic Preparedness and Response



[Tanya.Macdonald@hec.esc.ca](mailto:Tanya.Macdonald@hec.esc.ca)

[LTC+: Acting on Pandemic Learning Together \(healthcareexcellence.ca\)](https://healthcareexcellence.ca)



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# LTC+ Acting on Pandemic Learning Together

## Emergency to which the project/activity responded

The COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts in long-term care (LTC) and retirement homes (RH) across Canada.

## Project description

Healthcare Excellence Canada’s “LTC+: Acting on Pandemic Learning Together” program was launched in August 2020 in partnership with CADTH (Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health), Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety (MIPS), BC Patient Safety and Quality Council (BCPSQC), with funding support from CMA Foundation. The goal of the program was to support LTC and RH strengthen their pandemic response and mitigate the effects of subsequent waves. Promising practices were identified to support pandemic response as outlined in the [Reimagining Care for Older Adults](#) report and grouped under 6 key themes: preparation, prevention, people in the workforce, pandemic response and surge capacity, planning for COVID and non-COVID care, and presence of family. LTC+ supported the rapid dissemination of the promising practices and created a peer-to-peer learning environment to support homes in their pandemic readiness, response, and recovery through a menu of offerings based on capacity and needs. Offerings included a self-assessment, monthly webinar series, bimonthly huddles, coaching, and/or seed funding. Based on assessment results, homes selected a promising practice to help achieve their improvement goals. Coaching support and seed funding amplified the implementation process. Knowledge sharing occurred through the monthly virtual learning series and bimonthly national huddles. The program reached more than 1,500 LTC and RH across Canada. Homes have remained engaged throughout the program with 92% of participants attending at least one webinar, 80% attending at least one huddle and 49% receiving some form of coaching. The program successfully created a sense of community to support improvements in care for older adults in response to the pandemic.

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

Essential care partners were engaged as a key stakeholder group as part of the [Reimagining Care for Older Adults](#) report that identified the LTC+ program’s six key promising practices. LTC+ homes were committed to ensuring safe, quality care in a crisis while also trying to plan for pandemic recovery. Of participating homes, 75% reported increased awareness of promising practices aimed at strengthening pandemic preparedness, 78% reported increased readiness to respond to future outbreaks, 86% reported increased capacity to implement promising practices within their homes and 84% reported increased awareness of the benefit of supporting family presence during outbreaks. More than 50% of homes reported improvements in resident and/or family experience of care, the health of the residents, the work life of healthcare providers and the efficiency of care. LTC+ impacted many aspects of participants’ pandemic response including Infection Prevention and Control practices, communication and stakeholder engagement, residents’ and families’ experience of care, support for staff, mental health supports, and planning and preparedness.

## Lessons learned

LTC+ has shown the power of networking and the benefit of coming together to share and support each other, rather than operating in isolation. The LTC+ program became a trusted resource during a time when LTC and retirement homes were looking for evidence and guidance on how to respond to the pandemic. As the sector looks to recovery, there is an opportunity to further support and empower LTC and retirement homes with the knowledge and capacity to implement promising practices to improve the quality and safety of care.





## Republic of Moldova

February 2022 - Present



**HelpAge International in Moldova**  
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**Poster exhibition on Older  
Persons in Emergency Situations**

# Humanitarian Assistance for Ukrainian Refugees

## Emergency to which the project/activity responded

HelpAge International in Moldova launched a Humanitarian Assistance Programme for Ukraine Refugees in February 2022.

## Project description

**HelpAge International Humanitarian Assistance Programme for Ukrainian Refugees** operates in the Republic of Moldova, Poland and Ukraine. The programme has received funding from the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC UK), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), World Vision, World Food Programme, Canada-Ukraine Foundation and others. By 15 May 2022, the programme had assisted 43 Refugee Assistance Centres (RACs) with 530,000 hot meals, 2350 food packages, 8000 hygiene packs, 4000 vouchers for clothing. The programme conducted a rapid needs assessment for refugees aged 50 years and above to enable the programme to offer more targeted support to older people, including safe spaces with opportunities for socialization, information sharing, psychological and legal counselling.

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

Through its existing country office in Moldova, HelpAge International was able to respond to the Ukrainian refugee crisis from the beginning, working with the RACs to provide shelter and assistance to arriving refugees. The **Rapid Needs Assessment** conducted by HelpAge has helped to highlight the needs of older Ukrainian refugees and to adapt the response to support them: 62% are travelling with children or grandchildren; 28% need medication to manage chronic conditions such as diabetes; 19% need urgent assistance, often attributed to their lack of access to medicines; and 22% report having a disability.

Two centres that already work with HelpAge to offer assistance for domestic violence survivors, have also become temporary shelters for the refugees. The humanitarian programme has supported the centres to adapt their infrastructure to make them age-friendly and secure and has supplied them with the necessary equipment and assistive products for supporting older people with disabilities. Victoria, a woman refugee from Kharkov city (Ukraine) lives at an accommodation centre assisted by HelpAge.

*"I feel very welcomed here and I received all the support and good words from people. The most important thing is that I feel safe here in Moldova, but I want to go back home and I want peace for Ukraine",* said the old woman. She does not know how long she will stay in Moldova or what to do next.

## Lessons learned

Good cooperation and mobilization of stakeholders at all levels and the financial support from donors has facilitated the response and helped Moldova to manage the flow of refugees. Civil society organizations, including HelpAge International, have the capacity to respond immediately and adjust their work agenda to meet various needs of the refugees – older people, people with disabilities, Roma people, children, others. The work is ongoing and will continue to respond more specifically to the needs of older women and men refugees and will extend support to the refugees staying outside accommodation centres, in rented accommodation or with Moldovan host families.





## Republic of Moldova

2016-2020



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# Strengthening the human rights of older people in Moldova

## Emergency to which the project/activity responded

Violence, abuse and neglect of older women and men in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

## Project description

The Project “Strengthening the human rights of older people with focus on women in Moldova” funded by BMZ (The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany), implemented in the period of 2016-2022, aimed to reduce the impacts of violence, abuse and neglect of older people that had been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The project aimed to reduce the negative impact of the pandemic on older people by mobilising and training 120 volunteers to support older women and men by reducing isolation through phone calls and visits, by sharing age-friendly information about COVID-19 protection and prevention to older people and information about violence prevention and conflict resolution. HelpAge also provided practical support such as PPE kits, hygiene kits and food packages to more than 800 older people. 336 social assistance specialists were trained in protection and assistance for older women and men affected by domestic violence and publicity campaigns raised awareness of the public about how to recognize elder abuse and where to find support. The project also supported the Platform on Active Ageing, an independent network of NGOs, to monitor public policy on the protection of older people’s rights in the context of COVID-19 and successfully advocated with public authorities for relaxation of restrictions for the older persons and better integration of their needs into public services.

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

The project provided a response to older people’s immediate needs by supplying personal protective equipment, basic food and hygiene products and reliable and accessible information about COVID-19, prevention, care and support. Organizing both young and old volunteers to contact at risk older people by phone, and where possible making home visits was hugely impactful. It improved communication with older people, reduced their isolation and supported their mental wellbeing, by reducing the psychological pressure and fear of illness due to COVID-19. The project also organized counselling sessions by a public health specialist during the pandemic, and continued the already existent sessions with a psychologist and a legal expert through both phone calls and physical meetings if needed. These sessions provided trusted information for older people who did not visit the family doctor due to fears of infection, lack of money or transport, mobility or other problems. Legal advice helped older people understand issues on employment or inheritance, property rights and protection during the pandemic and social assistance specialists were better able to support older people. In this way, the project managed to bridge the gap in government service delivery to older people in an emergency situation, especially those living far from services in small villages and towns.

## Lessons learned

Older people (age 60+) in Moldova represent 22.5% of the total population of 2.9 million (data for 2021). Older women and men are often on low incomes, reliant on meagre pensions or remittances. They have limited opportunities for active and healthy ageing and often face social and economic exclusion. COVID-19 exacerbated existing risks and older people required immediate support and additional protection measures. Younger old and youth volunteers were able to provide this support and to complement gaps in government service delivery. The crisis highlighted prevailing ageist attitudes in society which were reflected in policies and interventions to control the pandemic, resulting in greater restrictions on older people (63 years and above) than the general population and reducing their access to services and support they need. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that state institutions and the public health system need better preparedness plans for the emergencies of this type and need better communication plans and systems adjusted for different population groups, including adaptation for older people. Older persons, civil society and community have a role to play in both the preparation and response to future emergencies.





## City of Ljubljana, Slovenia

2020 - 2021

Institute for home care Ljubljana  
[www.zod-lj.si](http://www.zod-lj.si)



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# Companion Calls

## Emergency to which the project/activity responded

COVID-19 pandemic

## Project description

The Institute for Home Care Ljubljana (public organization) was established in 2002 by the Municipality of Ljubljana to provide community based and home care support at the local level. Different types of community-based support (in-home care, home support services, group and local community activities) is provided for older people and others in need, living at home in the City of Ljubljana. Organised support may be needed due to illness, disability, or early onset dementia. Most spread, the in-home care, aims to support older people to remain at their homes for as long as possible by offering them help with daily tasks (personal care, household assistance and house maintenance support, preparing meals, maintaining social contacts and companionship). The service aims to support informal carers as well.

During the COVID-19 lockdown regular volunteering activities were stopped. That led to a new organised activity called “Companion Calls” in March 2020. In collaboration with the Municipality of Ljubljana we have gathered 82 volunteers: volunteers and employees of Home Care Institute Ljubljana, employees of Public Housing Fund City of Ljubljana and other employees of public cultural institutions (e.g. theatres). They have received 1200 calls and have talked to more than 600 older people from all over Slovenia. They have talked about different topics addressing mainly the pandemic situation. Many of them (60%) have mentioned the feeling of isolation and loneliness due to restrictions. They have also expressed their feelings and distress (about 25 %). Some have asked for support due to a lack of public services and restrictions of mobility in public. Some (around 10 %) have been deprived of support network and lacked supplies of medicines, groceries, and other essentials. They have been linked to the local service of Public Civil Protection and Caritas. Callers have asked for information about restrictive measures which some of them saw confusing and incomprehensible. Some have felt loneliness and isolation and needed a chat. Volunteers have been calling several times per week and they have spent many hours sharing stories and support. Regular phone calls and companionship have become a supportive link to the outside world.

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

Companion calls made by volunteers offered the possibility for older people and their relatives (informal caretakers) to feel emotional support and provided them with up-to-date information on the pandemic and other possibilities of network support. They felt less isolated and less socially excluded as they maintained contact with the outside world. They were helped to overcome loneliness and anxiety. They had the possibility to confide their fears, hardships and distress with volunteers. They also received daily information on the course of the pandemic, new measures, etc. and needed support available at that moment.

## Lessons learned

Good community-based networking and cooperation with several organizations at local level, despite difficult situations, generates new ideas and establishes solidarity between generations for an immediate response to older people in need.



# Senior box – helping hand for families of high-risk senior



## Slovakia

### 2015 - present

**Zuzana Fabianová<sup>1</sup>, Alena Mochnáčová<sup>2</sup>, Andrea Bratová<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>CEO of Nursing Home “Ošetrovateľské Centrum” (Winner of award Via Bona Slovakia 2016) and Social Services Facility with Nursing Care ZSS Slnečný dom, n.o. (Non-Profit Organisation, Winner of the Slovak National Quality Award 2014) in Humenné, Slovakia,

<sup>2</sup>Operations Manager of Social Services Facility with Nursing Care ZSS Slnečný dom, n.o. (Sunny House)

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## Poster exhibition on Older Persons in Emergency Situations

### Emergency to which the project/activity responded

High-risk older persons

### Project description

- The project is about the social responsibility of TOP nursing and social services facilities and other partners in Slovakia.
- Senior boxes are an original project, exceptional not only in Slovakia, possibly also in Europe and in the world.
- The project helps family members who wanted to take care of their relatives in illness and helplessness, for example after a sudden vascular accident or after a fracture, but they had almost no information about care, about help options. Our idea was to give these people a helping hand at a critical moment before they were released from the hospital. And so the Senior BOX was created, full of useful gifts and vital information. A very important part is our publication composed of useful tips from practical experience. In every Senior box there is a checklist for a comprehensive assessment of the quality of care for at-risk seniors in domestic conditions for non-professionals.
- Thousands of Senior Boxes have been distributed since 2015 to many hospitals throughout Slovakia.
- The project has already been supported by many respected personalities, institutions and societies.

### How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

- Each of the thousands of Senior Boxes can save lives in an emergency and is received with gratitude.
- Every Senior Box has made life easier for many patients and their loved ones.
- Senior Boxes include useful tips from practical experience and a checklist for a comprehensive assessment of the quality of care for at-risk seniors in domestic conditions.
- Through the unique cooperation of more than 150 philanthropic companies and volunteers, in the years 2015 to 2021 we managed to prepare and distribute 18,500 packages to the families of seriously and long-term ill.

### Lessons learned

- Very good feedback, even senior nurses of hospitals where we distributed the boxes highly appreciated the idea that supports the willingness and ability of relatives to take care of their seriously ill family members in home settings.
- This project has been a great benefit not only for individuals but also for society, exemplifying the importance of social responsibility, including at times of pandemic.







## Austria

September 2022 – June 2024

**PRO  
SENECTUTE**

with the support of

 Federal Ministry  
Republic of Austria  
Social Affairs, Health, Care  
and Consumer Protection



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Rome 15-17 June 2022

**Poster exhibition on Older  
Persons in Emergency Situations**

# Travelling Exhibition: STOP! NO VIOLENCE!

## Emergency to which the project/activity responded

Violence against older persons

## Project description

The travelling exhibition is a nationwide, low-threshold campaign aiming on the one hand at raising awareness in all groups of society about violence against older persons and on the other hand referring to possibilities for support and prevention. The travelling exhibition is a two-year project with one-week stopovers in all districts of every federal State in Austria. The project will be set up and implemented by the association “Pro Senectute Österreich” with the support of the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection and involves relevant stakeholders all over the country.

The exhibition focuses on physical, psychological and financial violence. These three categories of violence are illustrated in the context of places where violence can occur: at home, in institutions or in the public sphere.

The exhibition comprises short films, pictures, texts, information material and interactive features.

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

The main objectives of the project are to promote prevention of violence against older persons, foster social awareness in all groups of society and to provide low-threshold information especially for older persons where and how to get help and support in violent situations.

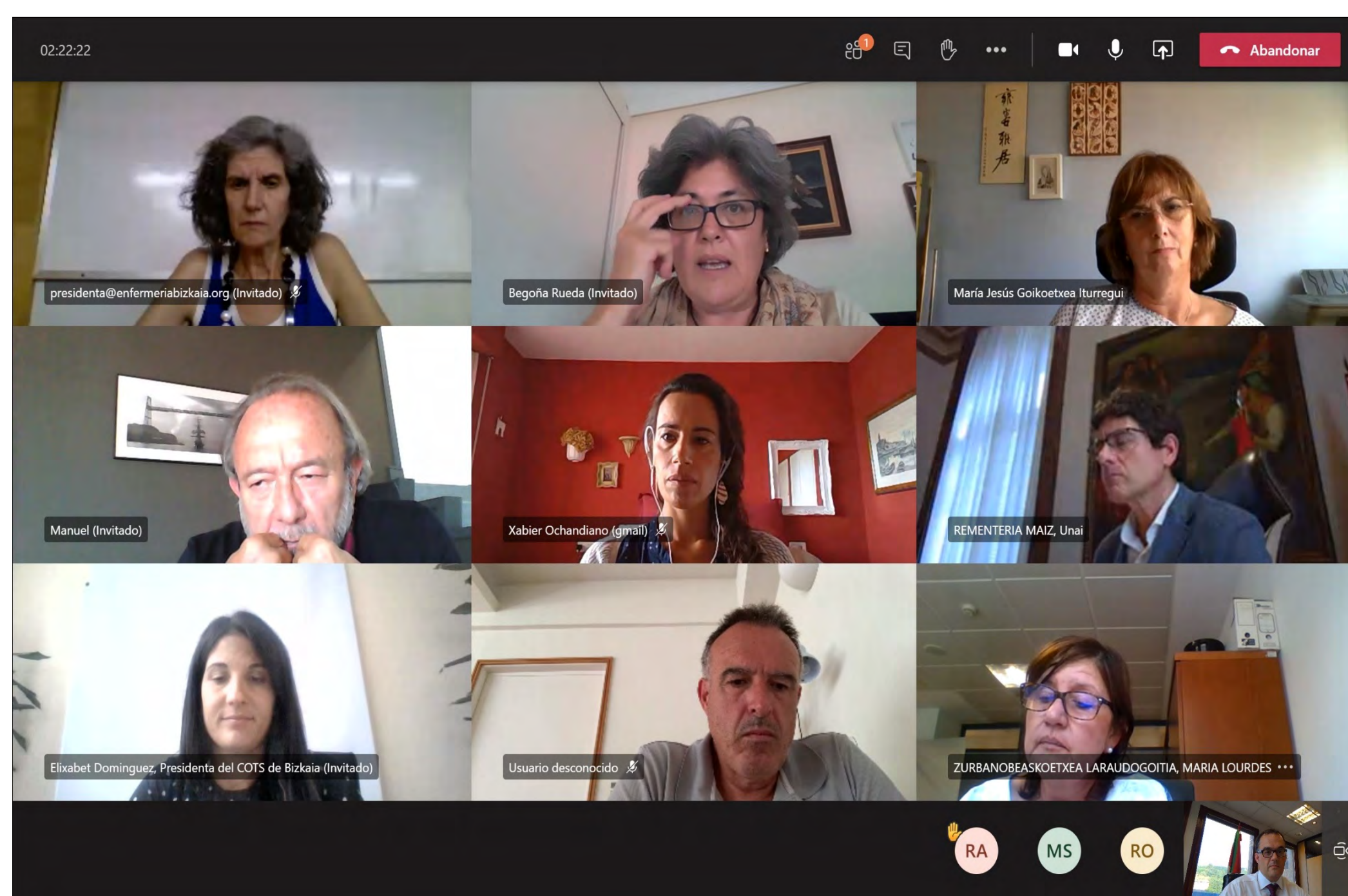
The exhibition aims also at encouraging exhibition visitors to reflect about the complexity and lack of visibility of violence against older persons as well as encourage them to act and seek help in violent situations.

An exhibition that moves continuously from place to place brings the topic to people as easily as possible and can create a broad basis for information, awareness and prevention.

## Lessons learned

- Violence against older persons is a violation of human rights
- Violence against older persons has many forms
- Violence against older persons is location-independent
- Violence against older persons is often invisible to external persons
- Violence against older persons must and can be avoided





## Biscay, Spain

August 2020 - June 2021

### Government of Biscay

<https://www.bizkaia.eus/>



### Poster exhibition on Older Persons in Emergency Situations

# Advisory Committee for monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic in care services for people in a situation of dependency and/or disability in Biscay

## Emergency to which the project/activity responded

COVID-19 pandemic

## Project description

The main objective of the project was to establish a forum for reflection, as an "ad hoc ethical laboratory", that sustains and generates prudent and effective recommendations with the aim of guiding decision-making by those responsible for comprehensive care for people in a situation of dependency and/or disability, both at home and in nursing home in the Government of Biscay.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all society, with a special impact on the most fragile and vulnerable people. Along with the enormous challenge of safeguarding the health and safety of these people, avoiding infection, and caring for those who fell ill, the need to do so by protecting their rights and avoiding irreparable damage and serious suffering derived from extreme isolation was soon detected. The "ad hoc ethical laboratory" created in this project made it possible to take shared decisions to protect the rights of these people.

To carry out this project, we used the following methodology: 1) Creation of a Consultative committee coordinated by the Minister for Social Action from the Government of Biscay, with the participation of 10 representatives from: Council for the Elderly; Round Table for Civil Dialogue (families/people with disabilities); Biscay Social Intervention Ethics Committee; Zahartzaroa - Basque Association of Geriatrics and Gerontology; Professional Associations for Social Work, Psychology, Nursing and Medicine of Biscay; other expert from Academia. 2) Continuous deliberation meetings every 3 weeks on possible resolutions to be adopted in situations that arise, involving the rights of older people and people with disabilities, and consequences of the decisions that are being adopted at broader level; 3) Preparation of reflection documents in working groups; and 4) Establishment of forums for training and regular dialogue open to professionals, entities, and citizens.

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

- The establishment of a reflection and deliberation group providing political and management leaders with recommendations on how to combine health protection and avoiding contagion with values to humanize care;
- Documents prepared within the group, such as the report on care criteria in COVID-19 cases in residential centres that avoid damage due to severe and prolonged isolation, or the report on "Care and support at home" with a shared and coordinated approach with the municipal social services and specialized social services;
- The inclusion of recommendations in 7 regional orders and decrees;
- The participation of 9,287 people in the online training to inform, train and support care professionals.

## Lessons learned

It is possible to incorporate ethical deliberation techniques in the decision-making bodies of the Public Administration, also in situations of serious crisis. The incorporation of shared deliberation allows the safeguarding of a greater number of values and rights of vulnerable people in such situations.





## Maribor, Slovenia

**2020 - Present**

**CENTER ZA POMOČ NA DOMU MARIBOR**  
**Home Care Centre Maribor**

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Persons in Emergency Situations**

# Sunshine and warmth in your home even in emergencies

## Emergency to which the project/activity responded

COVID-19, other infectious diseases and any other emergency/crisis situations with limited interactions between people and limited access to health care

## Project description

Main goal of our project "Sunshine and warmth in your home even in emergencies" is that our entire workteam in a multidisciplinary approach, brings sunshine and warmth into homes of older people even in emergencies, especially in COVID-19 situations, situations with other infectious diseases and also in any other emergencies or crisis situations that affect interactions between people or when access to health care is limited.

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

Many years of experience and practice teach us that prevention is better than treatment, and in the case of treatment, immediate targeted action is essential. In this way, we achieve enviable results and help older persons to a better and longer life in the home environment.

As part of the project we have designed a series of activities that can help seniors in crisis situations, especially in the field of relaxation and stress reduction in the event of an emergency. Individual conversations, providing basic information about the current situation, providing user-friendly information for solving problems, and above all focusing on positive thinking, were the guiding principles of the "SOS Friendly Phone". We are reaching a large number of users through telephone conversations, gathering information for further targeted assistance and identifying further actions. We are providing further assistance in the form of telephone expert advice and conversations with experts, by offering video and written materials related to mental and physical health care during emergencies.

At the same time we are providing a multidisciplinary team of experts - the "Therapeutic Team" - which resolves perceived situations in the field immediately or within a few days. Prolonged waiting for the response of the regular health care system can miss the crucial moment of the highest rehabilitation potential. After recovering from COVID-19 or other infectious diseases, immediate recovery under the professional supervision of a physiotherapist and occupational therapist is essential. With fast and adapted therapies, which we offer as an additional service to the users of the public home care service, we help older people to regain their physical capacity and eliminate the consequences of diseases. Many users who have become immobile as a result of suffering from severe forms of COVID-19 or other infectious diseases are back on their feet with appropriate and immediate rehabilitation and re-taught to perform basic daily tasks. Simultaneously with the rehabilitation of users, we are also relieving the social care system, as the older persons can continue to live in their home environment.

## Lessons learned

A multidisciplinary approach and quick action in relation to perceived situations are the key to success in ensuring the best and longest possible remain of older persons in their homes. With that we relieve the social welfare and healthcare system, which usually operates under great strain. With communication that follows at least basic gerontological methods of work and with focused conversations, we can significantly reduce and limit stressful situations that are present in emergency situations. Less stress means less illness and significantly faster recovery from illness.





## Durres, Lezhe and Tirana regions, Albania

May-June 2020



<http://mosha-network.org>



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**Poster exhibition on Older  
Persons in Emergency Situations**

# Emergency relief for the most vulnerable older people affected by the November 2019 earthquake in Albania

## Emergency to which the project/activity responded

November 2019 earthquake

## Project description

On 26th of November 2019, Albania was hit by the most powerful earthquake recorded in the country to that date. 51 people died and more than 20,000 were left without a shelter. The social day center of Kombinat Quarter in Tirana was damaged and out of order. The health centers in Lezhe and Durres were also damaged and not functional. Older people, especially those in need of continuous care were identified among the most vulnerable.

The project contributed to the emergency relief for the most vulnerable older people, to assure that older people with special needs, affected by the earthquake, have been identified and provided with appropriate support. The Albanian Association of Geriatrics and Gerontology (AAGG) together with its partners from pensioners associations and its MOSHA network (Movement of Organizations Supporting Healthy Ageing) carried out the intervention. The most at risk individuals were identified with the help of MOSHA network partners, the local health center's professionals and through the local government's contacts.

Volunteer doctors and social workers carried out the following activities:

- Identification of vulnerable people over 70 years affected by earthquake, with chronic diseases and without family carers;
- Distribution of basic medical equipment for measurement of hypertension and glycemia at home, provision of hygiene kits and some food package;
- Set up of self-help groups among older people who were affected by the earthquake, in collaboration with MOSHA network.

Training on humanitarian response for 20-25 members of AAGG and MOSHA Network was provided online by HelpAge International, which also supported financially the intervention.

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

The beneficiaries were sick and frail, their homes were badly damaged. 55% of older people assisted were women and 20% of them were bedbound. The medical devices they received (blood pressure and blood sugar measurement equipment) along with the training enabled them to continue monitor their health. Volunteers distributed hygiene kits and helped older people with instructions on how to minimize the risk of getting infected in their local conditions.

63% of older people assisted had high blood pressure at the moment of visit, 53% had high blood sugar, and 48% had clinical depression, measured based on CESD instrument.

The project also assisted in setting up 5 self-help groups among older people who have been directly affected by the earthquake, for sustainable psychosocial support.

## Lessons learned

This was the first experience of AAGG which included an emergency intervention. The lesson learned is that any preliminary activity to identify and reach older people at risk should include:

- community nurses and general practitioners at local health centres, health workers at affected local governments, and pensioners organisations, which may have very good grass root branches and detailed lists of members;
- it is key for an organisation which plans similar emergency interventions to have good connections with the three categories.





# Strengthening resilience of older persons and persons with disabilities during COVID-19 and future disasters

## Emergency to which the project/activity responded

COVID-19 crisis

## Project description

The project “Strengthening resilience of older persons and persons with disabilities during COVID-19 and future disasters” is a three-year initiative in the region of the Western Balkans, coordinated by the Red Cross of Serbia and supported by the EU, Austrian Development Agency and Austrian Red Cross. It connects CSOs from Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Kosovo\*, and civil society networks representing older persons and persons with disabilities at EU level.

Older persons and persons with disabilities even in ordinary times face significant constraints in participating in society and having their needs met, with cumulative effect on their health. The COVID-19 crisis amplified these issues and increased the risks for their physical and mental health and social exclusion. The project addresses these on multiple levels:

**Mental health component** aims to preserve mental health and enhance resilience of 60,000 older persons and persons with disabilities across six project sites through: Provision of information from verified sources including on the pandemic, self-protection (e.g. elder abuse or abuse of a person with disabilities in family context) as well as individual rights; Provision of Psychosocial Support services to ensure preservation of mental health and building of resilience.

**Relief/ Cash and Voucher Assistance component** aims to preserve and enhance the health and welfare of 6000 recipients in six project sites while strengthening capacities of National Red Cross Societies to provide Cash and Voucher Assistance.

**Strengthening Local Communities component** includes work on supporting and strengthening CSOs across the region to create local initiatives fostering social inclusion and direct support, as well as to engage with local policy makers.

**Research/ public policy/ advocacy component** aims to assist public policy makers in the six project sites in improving public policy in the wake of the COVID-19 epidemic, by providing evidence-based recommendations.

## How the activity contributes to protecting or engaging older persons in responding to emergency situations

30 telephone-based centres have been established coordinated by trained staff and operated by trained volunteers. The centres have been operational each working day in widely publicised timeslots and the number of callers has exceeded 7,000 older persons and persons with disabilities. This activity additionally empowers older persons as many of the volunteers working on the telephones are themselves older persons and are providing support to their peers.

From April 2022 the project has provided psychosocial support and support in organising local level activities in self-help, peer support and healthy ageing. The activities will be following the healthy ageing methodology developed by WHO and IFRC and include structured activities such as physical exercise, discussions, workshops etc. Self-help groups have been a proven way to activate older persons, increase their social inclusion and contribute to better mental and physical health.

Providing cash and voucher assistance helped address immediate needs related to health and social issues, especially in the context where the regular functioning of systems of healthcare and social welfare has been disrupted

## Lessons learned

- Cash and voucher assistance has proven to be highly effective in responding to the welfare needs of the target group, including covering out-of-pocket expenses for healthcare due to pandemic pressure on the public health systems
- The services and research activities implemented in the project show the importance of long-term care as an essential service to ageing populations. Crises that disrupt the delivery of health and social services expose the gaps already present in these systems and should be used as rallying call to ensure integration and tight coordination of long-term care services so that they can be provided more effectively and better target a wider scope of needs of the ageing population.

\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

**Western Balkans (Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Kosovo\*)**

**November 2020 – November 2023**

**Natasa Todorovic and Milutin Vracevic**  
**Red Cross of Serbia**

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RED CROSS SOCIETY OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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Крст / Крст / Република Северна Македонија се Верит  
Red Cross of the Republic of North Macedonia

Црвени крст Црне Горе  
Crveni krst Crne Gore

Shqipëria  
Genarist dhe Gerontologjia

Udruženje za  
pomoc i  
razvoj  
Association for Help and  
Development

NACIONALNA ORGANIZACIJA  
OSOB SA INVALIDITETOM SRBIJE

CARITAS  
KOSOVA

Хуманост

