

Friday 12th July 2024

Conference: “Strengthening Civil Society in the Danube Region for a Joint Europe” in the frame of the 8th Partner Meeting of the Danube-Networkers

Workshop 4: “Promoting cooperation through European caring projects using selected examples”.

Moderation by: Marina Kuch

Minutes made by: Angela Pudda

1. Input Johanna Kaiser (Karlsruhe, Germany, Diaconal Organisation of the Protestant Church in Baden e.V.) – “Creating impact: ‘Interreg funding’ as a way to foster transnational collaboration in the Danube Region”.

Johanna opens her presentation by emphasising that decision-making should not be influenced by fear, but by a sense of hope. We need actions that unite.

- Interreg is a key European Union (EU) instrument that strengthens cooperation between regions and countries within the EU.
- As part of the EU’s Cohesion Policy, Interreg plays a vital role in promoting regional development, cohesion, and reducing economic disparities.
- For the 2021-2027 period, Interreg is focused on addressing current challenges like climate change, digital transformation and social inclusion.
- Thanks to the Interreg projects, decision makers are brought together to get funding for applicable projects.

2. Input Caring Communities – “Improving outpatient care and home care in the Danube region”.

- New solutions are needed to ensure outpatient care and home care, particularly in rural areas. ‘Caring Communities’ aims to put good ideas for outpatient care into practice, scale them up and transfer them to other regions. The same problems and common tasks bring to a co-operation to learn from each other and provide better and better services for people who need help. In contrast to cities, the financial situation in rural regions is more difficult. This makes it all the more important to make the best possible use of funding opportunities. The universities of Zagreb, Sofia and Heidelberg are already active in their network to improve transformation, cooperation and scientific support as system challenges and to guarantee help for people in need.
- Not only the best practices and solutions are important, but also the ability to find the right partners for the respective projects. Innovative ideas from the field of digitalisation are tested, in which apps and digital tools for elderly people are developed in order to realise applicable ideas and to find good partners.

3. Input Dr. Heidrun Mollenkopf (BAGSO Bonn / Age Plattform Brüssel) – “Age Platform Europe as an international platform for older age”

- Age Platform Europe is the largest European network of non-profit organizations of and for older people. The aim is to elevate older people's voices bringing their experience and aspiration to the table to celebrate aging and fight for equality at all ages. Vision is a society for all ages.
- The project is 80% financed by the EU Commission and the remaining 20% is self-financed by the members and partners of the projects. They develop statements and reflections on the important points that should be elaborated.
- The most important contribution is to recognize the benefits of the aging process, not the costs and problems. Living alone in one's own home and continuing to make one's own competences available is an important objective in all projects. The economy and labour market, business, should change perspective. Those who want to continue to make their expertise available in their profession in old age should not be seen as an obstacle by the younger generation, but as a valuable member who wants to exchange experiences and learn new facts.
- An inclusive society is created when older and younger people combine their skills and learn from each other and combine their strengths. The public discourse and narrative often places young and older people in antagonism. However, both age groups are subject to discrimination. Some are too young to be able to do certain things, others are too old or obsolete and no longer up to date. This gap must be overcome.
- The discussion group is looking at ways of bringing young and older people together, creating opportunities to learn and work together. One barrier for older people is keeping up with digitalisation, at least for the things that are necessary for everyday life. The question also arose as to whether older people should have the right to exclude themselves, to refuse to simply ignore certain innovations of our time and thus be dependent on the help of others. The group agreed that older people who still have cognitive and physical abilities should continue to participate and find ways to be an independent part of society.