



## EU Health Pro Elderly

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**T**oday Europe is facing unprecedented demographic changes that will create stress for the health systems and will require substantial adjustments in the coming future. As many issues associated with demographic change lie within the exclusive competence of the Member State, models for health promotion for older people need to be shared at European level. The many individual good measures and practices need to reach across the national borders in order to allow practitioners and policy makers to make best use of the experience and achieved outcomes.

The best way forward to tackle this challenge is to develop health promotion programmes for older people, which aim at empowerment and thus makes active ageing possible. According to the WHO, active ageing can only be possible if health promotion programmes are implemented. It is possible to improve the quality of life of older people by empowerment strategies and the promotion of continuous physical and mental activity.

Therefore EFN and its members are involved in the EU-project "healthPROelderly: Evidence-based guidelines on health promotion for older people", which is led by the Austrian Red Cross and involves 17 partners from 11 countries. The aims of the "healthPROelderly-project" – that is co-financed in the framework of the public health programme of the European Commission (2003-2008) and the Funds for a Healthy Austria – are to collect health promotion models and practices for older people in the different Member States and analyse best practices in order to make best use of existing experience. Elements of best practices identified through the project will result in the formulation of guidelines and will contribute to reach a common standard for health promotion throughout the EU and to raise the standard and quality for health promotion within the Member States. A special focus of the evaluation – which will be the basis for the guidelines – will be on models shown to be successful in implementation,

model projects that are to be integrated in the long-term programming and models that target vulnerable groups and address inequality.

Identifying models and developing recommendations is the first step to respond to the challenges the European Union is facing in the coming years. In addition to that, health promotion and care services for older people need to be responsive to individual needs within a single European market. Successful aging means autonomy and independence of the older person. In many cases successful prevention and care will depend on nurses, who base their work on citizens' own resources and are closest to identifying early symptoms of impairments. Within the healthPROelderly-project it has become clear how important the cooperation of professionals from a variety of disciplines as well as the involvement of several agencies is for the health promotion of older people. Through identifying individual citizen's experiences of health promotion and provision, change can be initiated and improvements at local level, in the public health sector, can be achieved.

Therefore, within the policy making process, the Commission, the European Parliament, the World Health Organisation and the Council of Europe need to strengthen patients' and citizens' rights in any legislative initiative. Information to EU citizens about their health care rights and the quality assurance of services provided by health care professionals is essential to make an informed decision. In order to guarantee the compatibility between European social policy and the free market principles, adequate financing should be provided for older people care and active ageing.

More important, if we really want to make progress in improving the health of older citizens, is raising political awareness by involving local, national and European politicians. A basic assumption within the healthPROelderly-proj-

ect is that successful EU policy outcomes are based on qualitative and quantitative evidence. We need the hard data, but we also need the stories. These stories need to get the attention of the politicians and civil servants of the different institutions developing recommendations and legislation. The European Parliament has an important role to play in promoting the European projects and programmes on health promotion for older people. National politicians should be involved, especially in those areas where EU policy making is central and should advocate urgently for synergies in policy making between the different institutions, regardless their specific competencies.

**Website:** [www.healthproelderly.com](http://www.healthproelderly.com).

The database with models of health promotion in Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and United Kingdom will be available starting October 2007

**Website:** [http://www.efnweb.eu/version1/en/pos\\_stat\\_Elderly.html](http://www.efnweb.eu/version1/en/pos_stat_Elderly.html)

- EFN Position Statement on the care for the older person.

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