T.A.A.F.E.

Towards Alpine Age-Friendly Environment

INTERREG

Alpine Space Programme

I.S.R.A.A.
Istituto per Servizi di Ricovero
e Assistenza agli Anziani

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A growing ageing population and increasing number of isolated older adults demand new approaches and political commitment. Therefore, the WHO developed the concept of sustainable age-friendly environments (AFE), using an integrative approach to optimize the social and physical environments and promote active, healthy ageing and participation in society. The T.A.A.F.E. project uses this concept to build a participatory framework - T.A.A.F.E. model - for developing an age-friendly environment and an improved delivery of services in the Alpine Space (AS)

AT A GLANCE

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1. Introduction

This output is intended as an operational tool addressed to municipalities and public authorities in the Alpine Space wishing to initiate a participative process in order to implement services capable of intercepting the needs and desires of citizens, especially senior ones.

The increase in the older adult population in the Alpine Space regions, as well as in the rest of Europe, poses in fact a twofold challenge: on the one hand, to respond adequately to its needs by providing effective services; on the other hand, to give back a prominent role to the older citizen as a resource for the community.

Inspired by the Age-Friendly Environment approach promoted by the World Health Organisation and supported by the recent scientific reflection oriented at deconstructing narratives representing ageing as a social problem, the TAAFE project proposes a participatory model aiming at overcoming such rhetoric by fostering the idea of responsible ageing in the community, rather than a merely active one.

With this objective, this document provides an overview of the theoretical background underlying the participatory process and a number of practical suggestions for its implementation. In doing so, it gathers some key information about the methodology developed within Work Package 1 and the lessons learned from its implementation in the five sites involved in the pilot phase (Austria, in the municipality of Feldbach, France, in the municipality of Marseille, Germany, in the municipality of Möessingen, Italy, in the municipality of Treviso and finally in Slovenia, in the municipality of Zîri) collected within Work Package 2. Finally, it provides some indications on its sustainability (with reference to WP4) and suggestions for carrying out a social impact assessment of the participatory practices implemented and the started service (WP3).

2.   The TAAFE Model

As mentioned above, the TAAFE Model[1] is inspired by the Age-friendly cities and communities (AFCC) program developed by the WHO starting in the early 2000s with the scope of fostering the creation of age-friendly environments in cities and communities at a global level, paying attention to both urban and rural areas. This model consists of a four-step pathway- engage and understand, plan, act, measure [2] -to be deployed over a 4 to 5 years period. Based on a bottom-up approach, it aims at identifying in a participative way objectives and actions that can contribute to increasing the inclusiveness of older people in

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[1] For more extensive information on the TAAFE Model see D.T1.1.1 TAAFE Model and O.T1.1 TAAFE Toolkit

[2] World Health Organization, The Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities. Looking back over the last decade, looking forward to the next, 2018, p.6

the community where they live by acting on the eight age-friendly environments domains[3]. The TAAFE model differs from the one proposed by the WHO in two main respects: it reduces the implementation timeframe from 2.5 to 3 years; it plans to focus action on a single priority while adopting a flexible, cross-cutting approach to the eight domains. In addition, although essentially retaining the four-stage structure, the model also includes a time for celebrating the obtained results. The adaptation responds to the need to keep the action within the time frame of the Interreg Alpine Space funding programme, but at the same time aims to make the model more usable and thus easier to adopt.

2.1 TAAFE Model principles

The TAAFE Model builds on three key principles: being participative, gradual/systematic, and concrete.

Participation is designed to mix a top-down and bottom-up approach in order to have older citizens, local key stakeholders, authorities, and decision-makers involved together at the same level in the same process. What takes participation to a higher level within TAAFE, is the fact that older people are central actors in all phases of the process, including planning and implementation, and not exclusively during the initial consultation.

Gradualness and systematicity refer to the importance of approaching the model's steps progressively: on the one hand, clarifying to the participants from the very outset and reiterating in progress which are the stages composing the process and their specific purpose; on the other, ensuring that such stages are approached attentively and according to the established sequentiality; finally, making sure that proper and constant communication and information is maintained to make sure participants' understanding of the path followed, the reasons for the choices made and the actions planned and put into practice.

Concreteness refers to the importance of identifying realistic objectives in order to achieve tangible and pragmatic results that participants and the community can experience first-hand. Therefore, they must be circumscribed but of great significance for the community.

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[3] World Health Organization. (2007). Global age-friendly cities: a guide. World Health Organization. https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/43755

2.2 The TAAFE Model structure

The TAAFE model is composed of 4 phases: firstly, the identification of needs, aiming at analyzing what at the local level can be considered age-friendly and what, on the contrary, represents a criticality; on such basis, the choice of one or more priorities on which to act in order to increase the age-friendliness of the territory; then, the structuring of an action plan intended at responding to the priority(ies); finally, the implementation of the plan.

The model has a circular/cyclic structure: once priority(ies) implementation is completed, a new round of need assessment, priority choosing, planning, and implementation is started. Underlying this circularity is the idea of a learning community whose awareness and comprehension of age-friendliness and local context characteristics and needs constantly grow. Every cycle is therefore based on more solid knowledge and experience. Each phase of the cycle is also constantly monitored and the results reached through implementation are evaluated. Such evaluation contributes to increasing awareness and knowledge as it provides feedback on the impact of what has been launched and on the effectiveness of the process itself in sustaining citizens' participation.

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, at the end or in the coincidence of important achievements of the cycle a specific moment is dedicated to celebrating the results. Celebration is an important ingredient both for a new cycle starting and for the sustainability of the model. It permits to publicly show the results obtained and the advantages that the actions taken have brought to older adults and to the entire community. Moreover, it gives value to the effort and commitment of the participants, equally central to the model's sustainability as it can reinforce engagement and commitment. In brief, the celebration can act as an effective means of becoming aware of what has been achieved through the choral work and presenting it to the community.

2.3 The TAAFE Model's main elements

The above illustrated four-step path is preceded by two core preparatory actions. The TAAFE Model in fact requires the identification of two key elements playing the fundamental roles of launching, managing, implementing, and monitoring the model: a Trio made up of representative(s) of senior citizens, administrative employee(s), and methodological facilitator(s). The principal task of the Trio is to guide the entire process, ensuring older citizens' and other stakeholders' engagement and participation. The Model also asks to set up a Local Action Group composed of people with different professional, educational and personal backgrounds. The Local Action Group is intended as a research-consultancy-

working group that constantly flanks the Trio. The Trio and the Local Action group are therefore the figures through which participation is concretized: their joint action enables a match between the community's needs and wishes and policy-makers strategies[4]. So conceived, participation in TAAFE aims at promoting (with respect and avoiding obligation), an active and responsible role of older people in services building and community life to overtake the traditional binomial policymakers-providers /citizens-users.

2.3.1 The TRIO

The mandate of the Trio is to act as the guide of the participatory process, so the identification of its members is the first step to be taken at the local level. As the name suggests, the TRIO is composed of three figures: the older adults 'representative, the administrative employee, and the methodological facilitator.

Key in the Trio is the older adults' representative, whose main task is to be the spokesperson for older citizens, bringing their needs, wishes, and resources to the table, paying special attention to the "hard to reach" ones. Older people representative is also invited to involve other persons in the participatory process so that they can contribute to its different phases. To this end, this role should be taken on by an individual presenting the majority of the following characteristics:

- Possessing a good knowledge of the local area, its principal resources, and criticalities;
- Have a good network of relations enabling him/her to represent different types of senior citizens: the autonomous ones, the ones in need of long-term care, and older people with different interests and political orientations;
- Being involved in community life through practical experience in associations, voluntary or similar organizations and activities;
- Being cooperative;
- Being open and curious;
- Having good organizational skills and good communication skills;
- As the time to be devoted to such a role can be significant, it is important that he/she does not hold too many different positions at the same time or be an active person on multiple fronts;
- Doesn't let his personal political views affect his/her position when speaking as representative of all older people;

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[4] For more extensive information on the Trio and Local Action Group see D.T1.1.1 TAAFE Model, booklet 1, worksheet 1, and worksheet 3

- Being able to validate or contradict the municipality if it is contrary to the older people's voice even if he/she is politically aligned with the political majority that leads the municipality.

The administrative employee is the other relevant figure of the Trio. He/she has the important task to act as a bridge between older people and policy and decision-makers. Due to this role, it is important that he/she has the following characteristics:

- Thinking out of the boxes;
- Being curious;
- Being operative;
- Being able to reserve some time slots for this specific assignment in his/her weekly agenda for at least one day or two per week.

The last figure in the Trio is the methodological facilitator, whose main assignment is to ensure that the participatory method is properly carried out. The person(s) playing this role is responsible for the quality of the local team's work, taking care to monitor and guide the internal dynamics of the Trio, of the Local Action Group, and those between them. The facilitator should therefore have the following characteristics:

- Being curious;
- Being open-minded and welcoming;
- Being familiar with participatory methodologies and working with different types of people and stakeholders;
- Having a significant amount of time to reserve for the activities foreseen by such a role.

2.3.2 The Local Action Group

The identification of the Local Action Group follows that of the Trio. Because of its advisory and operational role along the process's stages, its composition should be as varied as possible in order to favor a synergy between plural professional skills, knowledge, and experience.

The group should therefore include figures like the following, for a total of about 15 components:

- Approximately half of all members should be retired older persons involved in organizations and/or in volunteering, including other influential and active older persons;

- Manager(s) of municipal departments/services;
- Head or influential doctor or nurse with a good knowledge of the territory, the older adult population, and its needs;
- Heads or influential professionals of important local institutions, e.g. nursing homes, home care providers, daycare or intergenerational centers, and social care centers;
- An expert in spatial planning and infrastructure from the municipal administration or a relevant local professional of the topic;
- One or more municipal councilors;
- A representative of the media, known and trusted by the community (editor or journalist of a local newspaper, radio, television);
- People with different backgrounds, generations, or areas of expertise, respected by local inhabitants, who can contribute significantly to the development of age-friendly communities and intergenerational coexistence;
- Kindergarten or school director/teacher;
- Any specialist of the chosen action to be undertaken.

These recommendations are of a general and indicative nature. Both the composition and the number of participants are in fact variable and are deeply influenced by local peculiarities (political-administrative structure, the composition of the social fabric, number and type of organizations active in the areas…) and by the priority identified, consequently the knowledge and skills it requires.

3. The TAAFE Model implementation

The implementation of the model in the pilot sites not only made it possible to test its effectiveness and adaptability to diverse socio-cultural and political contexts but also allowed for the development of several practical pieces of evidence to be taken into account when adopting it. In this perspective, the lessons learned during the experimentation have enabled the maturation of the original theoretical-methodological TAAFE framework. Therefore, in order to offer guidance to those wishing to replicate the model, the core steps of the process and the actions required for their realisation are presented below, accompanied by the evidence gained through the implementation of each of them[5].

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[5] For more extensive information see D.T2.4.1 Results from TAAFE Model implementation into 5 AS areas

3.1 Building the TRIO and managing its dynamics

Below are the elements that emerged as most significant in composing the Trio and managing its internal dynamics and operativity. In this regard, it is worth remembering that the Trio's functioning is based on preferably weekly meetings. However, this timing is adaptable and changeable as it is related to the necessities and contingencies of the work at the local level.

3.1.1 Composing the TRIO

Composing the Trio may take a long time. The timing is influenced at first by the method of selection chosen (spontaneous applications, a choice made by policy-makers, a choice made by a group of collaborating organizations…). In addition, once the selection has been completed, there may be cases of withdrawal (for personal reasons, change of job or reassignment of the administrative employee, or renunciation by the representative of seniors due to the excessive amount of effort needed…) which will require a replacement. It should be borne in mind that this possibility may be higher in the case of the older person(s), who in the TAAFE model is involved on a voluntary basis.

Another relevant factor is that the older person(s) must be able to put the common good before self-interest or the interest of the organization he/she belongs to. The TAAFE process foresees a participatory choice of the priority(ies) on which to focus action that may not be in line with what is of direct interest to the members of the Trio. In case such an eventuality arises, the older person, precisely because of his/her voluntary involvement, may be more exposed to the risk of disinvesting, losing interest, or abandoning the initiative. During the selection phase, it is therefore important to clarify the choral dimension of decision-making in order to avoid this risk as much as possible. Voluntariness of older representative(s) should also be considered when allocating tasks or asking for availability along the process, as (of course according to local and personal specificities) a volunteer cannot be expected to devote the same number of working hours and commitment compared to those whose work is remunerated.

Finally, it is important to note that the Trio foresees the identification of three different types of members, but this does not mean that each role has to be covered by only one person. On the contrary, having more than one person for each role proves to be an added value from several perspectives: it makes it possible to represent different genders, different

professional and experiential backgrounds, and different areas of the city according to where people come from. This plurality not only enriches the dialogue but also improved operativity since multiple skills complemented each other and the different tasks to be undertaken could be divided among multiple persons. However, it is important to ensure that there is a balance between the number of members of the Trio and the effective capacity of the methodological facilitator(s) to manage internal dynamics, particularly those related to communication. A too high number of members can put this to the test and compromise the smooth functioning of the group.

3.1.2. Internal communication and organization

Good internal communication is a key ingredient to sustaining positive dynamics between components and a good work organization.
In this regard it is important:

- to clarify everyone's role in the TRIO from the very beginning, thus dividing up and tackling tasks more systematically and efficiently. By doing so, misunderstandings about who should do what and overlapping are also prevented;
- to provide homogeneous communication and information among members on topics discussed and decisions taken (i.e. circulating minutes, by phone update, via WhatsApp or SMS, depending on which channel(s) proved more effective). This is core also in the intent to guarantee the transparency of the process;
- to listen to everyone's voice and welcome eventual doubts and criticalities. Lack of familiarity with participatory methodologies may lead to a need for orientation and clarification, which must always be accepted and carefully addressed;
- to ensure regularity and systematicity of meetings helps to put the basis and maintain the coherence and solidity of the path undertaken.

Besides the identification of the most appropriate communication channels and strategies, clarity and systematicity emerged as fundamental and shared guidelines that should be applied across the different operational dimensions of TRIO's collaboration. It appears important to clarify everyone's role in the TRIO from the very beginning. Delimiting a precise perimeter for each member makes it possible to divide up and tackle tasks more systematically and efficiently according to each person's skills and possibilities, and also in terms of type and quantity. A structured organization helps prevent misunderstandings about what should be done by whom and therefore avoids risky overlapping of roles and activities, preventing encroachment on the field of competence of others, and wasting time and resources.

Such a way to proceed is strategical from two perspectives: from a merely practical point of view, planning consents more fluid management of the activities to be done to reach one or

more specific objectives; even more important, it contributes to providing participants with a more concrete representation of what is expected, enables them to observe the steps taken, the results progressively achieved and to maintain a clear view of the final objective. Awareness about the progress is precious to reinforce the sense of ownership over a process in which each one has a precise role, and the sense of belonging to a team that, thanks to the intertwining of its diversified competencies, is making progress.

3.2 Building the Local Action Group and managing its dynamics

As for the Trio, it is useful to associate with the theoretical and methodological guidelines that form the background of the model, and some additional practical indications that have emerged from its adoption and testing. Such indications can provide useful advice for the engagement of its members and guide group activities, that are based on regular meetings led by the Trio.

3.2.1 Composing the Local Action Group

The composition of the Local Action Group may take a long time, determined in turn by the process chosen for its selection, the (un)familiarity of the stakeholders with participatory practices, and the grade of interest and awareness on the issue of age-friendly environments. In addition, the composition of the working group may not be defined from the outset, but provide for the entry or, sometimes, the exit of some members depending on the priority identified: on the one hand, it may require the involvement of individuals or organizations with specific expertise on the emerged topic, if not present; on the other hand, a lack of interest in the priority that came out may lead to withdrawal. Also, the group can grow thanks to the networking developed during the process's deployment or thanks to the dissemination of information on the initiative. The Local Action Group may therefore be subject to some changes over time.

In this regard, it has been transversally observed that approaching potential members through personal contact is more effective than standardized, general invitations. Direct contact and tailor-made communication allow enhancing the contribution that each person/organization can bring to the initiative, as well as highlighting the benefits that can be gained from participating in the process and the fruitful synergies and collaborations with other realities that can arise from it.

What appears equally effective is to involve associations, organizations, and people with whom there is a previous connection permits to facilitate engagement by virtue of the relationship of trust already established. This reciprocal trust can also encourage such organizations or persons to act as intermediaries to engage others. Previous knowledge of age-friendly themes and the participatory practices proposed by the model is equally useful since it facilitates understanding of what is intended to be implemented and the methods adopted for this purpose;

3.2.2 Internal communication and organization

As for the TRIO, clarity of communication and organization is another crucial factor. Before each meeting, it is useful to explicate the rationale behind it, its time frame, and the topics of discussion by circulating an agenda or providing information through other channels considered effective. Doing so allows participants to get a clear understanding of the reasons why their commitment and time are required. Topics and timelines must therefore be respected. It is equally central to keep a clear track of what is being discussed so that issues addressed, opinions expressed, and decisions made are accessible and verifiable, and so that those not present can keep up to date. Clarity must also characterize communication rules. The facilitator has to make sure that they are respected, so that everyone has the opportunity to give his/her opinion, avoiding the discourse being monopolized by the same persons or organizations.

Because of the diversity of participants in the Local Action Group, it is essential to embrace a flexible approach to managing internal communication. It may be necessary to adopt different channels and means depending on the stakeholders. As an example, besides circulating emails, to convene a meeting or diffuse the minutes, it may be useful to send a message or make a phone call to some of the participants who are less likely to use this tool and with whom direct communication is more effective. The diversity of the members involved also calls for the ability to modulate and choose the most appropriate register so that everyone can have a good understanding of the discussion.

Meetings are the core instrument to work with the Local Action Group. For this reason, they must be regular. Regularity gives solidity to the process undertaken, making it clear to participants that they are involved in a structured, well-guided, and purposeful process. In this sense, regularity helps to sustain participation and engagement, avoiding dispersion. Moreover, it allows for the development of a shared vision and language (core factors when

working as a group), as well as improving communication and thus fostering familiarity. However, regularity should not be confused with "too high frequency", which may discourage participation. Participants may consider too demanding the time and resources asked to take part in the process.

3.3 Supporting engagement and involvement

The participatory pathway set out in the TAAFE model requires constancy and a considerable investment of time and resources. The engagement and commitment of the participants are thus factors to which great attention must be paid in order to keep active the parties involved and enable the process to run. Engagement and commitment must be carefully addressed both at the beginning of the process when it is important to stimulate interest and motivation to participate, and during it, when they must be kept high, especially in front of difficulties.

In this regard, the implementation in the five pilot sites has made it possible to isolate a number of elements that should be taken into account in order to foster commitment and engagement:

- Interest in the process, and not only in the specific objective identified, must be shared by the parties, especially in the case of organizations and institutional stakeholders. The TAAFE model in fact requires an investment of time and resources that asks for a clear internal organization; for this reason, it is fundamental in alignment with the organization's objectives, development lines, and interests. To this end, it is advisable to clarify from the outset the type of process to be put in place and the commitment of resources and time that may be required. In order to keep the parties engaged and committed from the beginning and, as far as possible, throughout the process, it is important to clarify its structure, timing, and operation;

- It is strategic to evidence the importance of working towards a realistic and concretely achievable goal(s), that can be small but of great value to the community. Making this aspect evident and reiterating it both at the beginning and during the planning of objectives and actions is useful to avoid the creation of potentially unsatisfactory expectations among stakeholders, especially citizens and organizations, or to face failure, therefore generating frustration, resentment, and lack of interest. Seeing an objective of value realized, something capable of conveying a benefit to the community contributes to raising the level of satisfaction and involvement. This strategy is also key for maintaining the presence and

involvement of the public authority, which will not feel burdened with the responsibility of having to undertake onerous actions -both in terms of financial investment and from the organizational perspective- that it is unable to sustain, with the dangerous risk of creating disappointment in the citizens and local partner organizations. It is also crucial to make clear to the working group from the outset that actions will focus on one priority at a time, and that other important priorities emerging from the needs assessment could be developed in the next cycle;

- The participatory process requires that much time be set aside for discussion. This can discourage participation, especially (but not only) by older people, who may find it difficult to grasp its purpose, calling for more concreteness. It is, therefore, useful to explain and help understand that in participative methodologies discussion coincides with action, and is a key ingredient; it is important to implement concrete activities, when possible, thus restoring a balance. Defining a timetable to help mark out the time, showing where the action is going to take place, is very useful for this purpose. Equally useful is identifying interim minor objectives linked to the final result, favoring the perception of concreteness and the feeling of taking steps towards the goal.

3.4 Managing the process

As a primary and basic indication, the methodology behind TAAFE Model suggests the organization of five principal meetings[6]: an introductive one, aimed at presenting the working group (namely the Local Action Group and the Trio) and the intentions of the participative process that is about to start; four others, that are essential to pass through its pivotal steps. On such occasions, Trio and Local Action Group come together to confront, share, discuss and plan. Some of these meetings are open to the local community, so as to collect further points of view and suggestions. Once the implementation of the activities connected to the priority has started, meetings' frequency depends on the needs that arise and the characteristics of the work organization at the local level. The conduction of the meetings is in the hands of the Trio, who can build on or take inspiration from the indications contained in the booklet "Towards age-friendly communities"[7]. This tool can be handed over to all members of the Local Action Group so they can get a more detailed overview of the methodology and its objectives, and go deeper into the topic of age-friendly environments

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[6] For more extensive information see D.T1.2.1 TAAFE Methodology booklets "Towards age-friendly communities".
[7] For more extensive information see D.T1.2.1 TAAFE Methodology booklets "Towards age-friendly communities".

Also in this regard, model testing has allowed collecting some indications that can complement the theoretical and methodological background for more effective management of the encounters and the four steps.

3.4.1 Need assessment and priority choosing

The scope of the need assessment is to start a discussion between Local Action Group and Trio members to bring together different perspectives and points of view on local age-friendliness and to isolate then one or more priorities to be responded to through the implementation of a series of activities and/ or services. Different looks, experiences, and competencies contribute to a richer reflection, resulting in a more comprehensive, multi-level, and detailed overview. However, at this stage, it is necessary to be able to provide space for contributions from all, while at the same time clarifying the necessity to reach a unified and common conclusion. For these reasons, need assessment and priority choosing are delicate moments. Here are a few suggestions to can provide support to the Trio and methodological facilitator(s) in their administration:

- During opinion collection, participants' personal expression must be free but oriented: this means that everyone should be able to express themselves freely, but within a guided and balanced dialogue that allows all those present to make their contribution and reduces the risk of losing touch with the topic at the question. Moreover, themes and issues that emerge should be the subject of collective discussion. Such a confrontation highlights the connections between points of view and issues arising and permits the development of a common language and vision on the theme of age-friendly environments. It also makes it possible to give substance to the label "age-friendly environments" linking it to tangible elements and characteristics of the local contexts. Find a local meaning and declination to this category favors familiarisation and progressive appropriation;

- It is advisable to define and make clear to all participants the method that will be used to collect opinions, compare them and come to the definition of one or more priorities. Consistency with the method and transparency along the identification pathway will then allow showing its correctness. Such a result can be achieved with constant sharing, communication, and updating. Leaving written or verifiable evidence is also beneficial. This way of proceeding also makes it possible to highlight that the priority final choice is really the results of a discussion and confrontation, and not predetermined at the outset. It also enables trust in the Trio to be strengthened by showing it acting fairly and openly.

3.4.2 Planning and implementing activities

In these delicate phases, the members of the Local Action Group, led by the Trio, are called upon to ideate and agree on a series of initiatives or on the creation of service in order to respond to the identified priority(ies). This calls for careful identification and planning of activities to reach such a scope. The Trio must therefore guide the group in proposing and then bringing ideas together and turning them into concrete and well-defined actions. Here, members are invited to bring into play and create synergies between their competencies and resources, on the basis of which they can divide up tasks during the operational phase. In addition to the specific methodological indications for this activity, the following variables should also be borne in mind:

- The participation and engagement required for participants to take part in the process are high, especially at this stage. Therefore, the interest and commitment of the actors in the action taken must be equally elevated. Especially in the case of organizations, the chosen priority must somehow align with internal interests and lines of development and produce some direct or indirect benefits. To this end, the Trio must be able to underline the kind of benefit that working on the emerged priority can bring to each reality while enhancing the great value of the contribution that each organization can make in terms of knowledge and skills;

- It is important to keep planning anchored to reality, therefore to identify circumscribed but significant objectives and actions. Planning on the basis of the resources, skills, and availability already present in the working group is a very effective strategy for this purpose, and in the long term will help to achieve the objective;

- A very precise organization of actions, division of roles and tasks, and a defined sequence of activities are key elements to support the process and ensure its smoothness. This does not mean that failures do not occur and that revisions are not necessary, but it helps to clarify a direction and a method to follow, to which everyone is asked to comply.

4. The sustainability

The TAAFE Model is structured to promote its own sustainability and systematization. As above mentioned, the cyclical structure of the model is designed to encourage its replication over time. Once the service has started, and the goal is reached, the Local Action Group, led by the Trio, is invited to conduct a new need assessment and/or to evaluate some of the relevant issues that emerged during the previous one. Circularity, therefore, supports a systematization of the TAAFE participatory model as an executive and operational tool through which to interact directly with the community.

On the other hand, the sustainability of the service/activities initiated depends on the maintenance of the working group that collaborates to design and implement them. These two levels of sustainability, that of the model and that of the service initiated, are ultimately profoundly linked. Failure to invest in the model exposes what has been achieved to progressive deterioration.

Local implementation has also highlighted some additional variables that can contribute to sustainability:

• Promoting motivation, which is made up of two principal layers:

  o Motivation to take part in the working group is closely linked to the concreteness of the actions implemented, which is functional in showing on the one hand the effectiveness of the collective work, which starts from an idea that has led to a tangible result, and on the other the effectiveness of that action on the territory and the community in terms of benefits;

  o Motivation also depends on the advantage that the parties involved derive, according to their position and role, from taking part in the process. Looking at the policymakers, the advantage may be the visibility that comes from offering a functional response to the community's needs. From the organizations' perspective, such advantage can arise from the creation of a fruitful synergy with other organizations they had the chance to collaborate with, from the possibility to gain visibility and offer to their network new opportunities. Finally, the advantage may also be of the personal nature of the individual, who feels useful to the community, who has the opportunity to enhance their skills and experience, acquire new ones, or make new friends.

• Foster continuity, intended in two main declinations:

  o The sense of continuity between the objectives and actions of the work undertaken by the working group and the development lines already in place both at an institutional level and within a specific organization emerges as an essential element. Such kind of continuity allows for consolidation of the collaboration between the parties, as well as the will to support and develop what has been achieved;

  o From a more general point of view, continuity should also be understood as the intention to sustain the method and its results by making them structural. This depends above all on the institutional component, which should be oriented towards valorizing what has been achieved and systematizing the participatory method as a channel for strengthening ties with the community and the territory. However, such systematization may take time. Nevertheless, it is important for participants at all levels to be able to identify with a horizon of shared meaning and development, which is a nodal element for looking ahead and giving continuity not only to the actions carried out but also to the synergies created.

The TAAFE project also developed a series of actions aimed at fostering the sustainability and scalability of the TAAFE Model at the local and regional level in the frame of WPT4 Development of the TAAFE Strategy for an Age-friendly AS. Specifically:

• The organization of four meetings in each pilot site called "policy group meetings" involves local stakeholders, decision and policy-makers, and representatives of major services and institutions. Such meetings have the scope of creating familiarity with the age-friendly environments approach, launching a debate on the opportunities its adoption can bring locally to deal with the challenges posed by population aging, illustrating the TAAFE Model as a tool to increase age-friendliness, and presenting its local implementation and results. These meetings should also support the development of strategies to sustain the open services/initiatives and explore up-scaling possibilities at a regional level[8];

• Capitalizing on the policy group meetings, but also by means of further awareness-raising and information actions at the local level, the project partners are invited to build a network that can in turn foster a progressive systematization of the age-friendly perspective and of the TAAFE model as a tool for the participatory

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[8] For more extensive information see D.T4.2.2 Minutes on possible further developments in the pilot regions

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construction of services.[9] The stakeholders of such a network are then invited to sign a Memorandum of Understanding[10] to ensure their interest and commitment to further adoption of the participative tools developed in the pilots.

The framework outlined shows how sustainability is a complex result, the achievement of which depends on multiple variables: the structure of the model and its cyclical nature, the actions aimed at cultivating and sustaining engagement and commitment that cut across its four phases, the ability to keep a constructive dialogue open between the players involved as regards roles, tasks, and objectives. Sustainability is therefore the result of constant, multilevel negotiation and mediation, which does not take place at the end of the process, but on the contrary, must lay its foundations from the outset and grow throughout its course.

5. The evaluation

Fundamental to the TAAFE project was the evaluation of the two cornerstones of the participative process initiated: on the one hand, its capacity to foster older adults' participation in decision making, and on the other, its potential to sustain the realization of service or initiatives capable of improving the inclusiveness of the community towards them.

In order to develop this analysis, the chosen approach was Social Impact Evaluation (SIA). This research practice is characterized by diversified methodologies and analytical techniques that are linked to its interdisciplinary nature. Indeed, SIA adopts perspectives and tools, among many others, from social research, sociology, economics, anthropology, and psychology.

Ultimately, it is possible to define social impact as a combination of resources, inputs, processes, or policies, generated by the presence and action of certain actors who, in pursuit of desired ends, alter the living, working, and relational conditions of the population, as well as the norms and values that guide their cognition of themselves and the surrounding society. In this sense, the concept of 'impact' is able to include desired and undesired, negative and positive effects, which manifest themselves in both the short and long term. In short, in this framework, the impact can be defined as the difference between the outcomes

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[9] For more extensive information see D.T4.4.2 TAAFE networks starting from the pilot
[10] For more extensive information see O.T4.2 Common Memorandum of Understanding

generated by an organization's activities and what would have happened in the absence of such intervention.

The concept of impact is thus based on the analysis of the changes generated by an intervention on and in society, not only with respect to the direct recipients but also to all those who are in some way affected by the intervention under consideration, i.e. the stakeholders.

Because of its multidimensional and all-encompassing approach, the SIA perspective has been adopted by Work Package 3[11] leaders to measure the impact of the TAAFE Model on local communities with the intent to give as complete and complex a return as possible. Specifically, the SIA analysis implemented made use of three tools, considered particularly appropriate for reading and analyzing with the most appropriate lens the two elements mentioned above, namely its capacity to sustain effective participation, and its ability to create benefit and inclusiveness towards the older population:

- A pre-post analysis, to measure the impact of the participatory methodology on the level of participation in each pilot site;

- A social impact assessment, carried on through a SWOT analysis with the aim to recognize the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the pilot actions and to highlight the changes created by the project;

- SROI analysis to test TAAFE's social impact assessment model.

The 'pre-post' evaluation was developed with the aim of measuring the impact of the participatory methodology on the level of participation of citizens, professionals, and members of organizations involved in the pilot actions. The measurement of the impact was based on a Cantril scale by means of which respondents could rate, with a score from 1 to 10, their level of participation in participatory planning and/or decision-making with regard to the domain(s) concerned by the identified priority.

In view of its characteristics, such an instrument is particularly useful in order to gain quantitative information on the effectiveness of the participatory method implemented. More specifically, it has been adopted to gain the opinion of the members composing its pivotal figures, the TRIO and the Local Action Group.

Besides this, the scope of the social impact assessment was to gather information of a more qualitative nature on the pilot actions. For this scope, a SWOT- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats- analysis was chosen, investigating the activities and actions

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[11] For more extensive information see Deliverable D.T3.2.1 Report on social impact evaluation and Deliverable D.T3.3.1 Report on "pre-post" evaluation

implemented in the different pilot sites. The SWOT was conducted by means of an open-ended questionnaire addressed to TRIO members. Facilitator(s), older adults' representative(s), and administrative employee(s) were asked to identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities with respect to the different actions locally realized and their effect on the community.

Such type of analysis, conducted through this instrument, appears appropriate for the purpose of collecting qualitative data capable of shedding light on the multiple aspects of the process from the point of view of the participant or, more appropriately, of the specific role assumed by the participant within the process.

Finally, an SROI -Social Return on Investment analysis was implemented. The SROI technique allows measuring the correlation among benefits and costs incurred for a given initiative—with a measure expressed by a proportion among the invested amount and its social return. The application of SROI makes it possible to understand how project activities can generate value; this value is estimated in monetary terms that are then compared with the investment made at the initial stage. The strength of SROI is the participation of stakeholders involved in different capacities in what is being evaluated. In fact, SROI evaluates change to the extent that it is relevant to the people or organizations experiencing it or contributing to its creation.

This methodology is a kind of cost-benefit analysis that takes into account, in a cross-cutting approach, the various types of impact. The objective of this methodology is therefore to identify and measure impact by analyzing the inputs and results implemented (and perceived) by the various stakeholders. The results, which essentially consist of the impact generated, are expressed through a ratio to the investment (an SROI with a ratio of 3:1 indicates a social impact three times greater, in economic terms, than the investment made). However, despite the use of this monetary 'language', the SROI does not express the financial value generated as such, but in relation to the social impact created, i.e. in terms that can be defined as "social value currency".

The methodology in question, therefore, starts from a primarily qualitative investigation of the experience of the "stakeholders", i.e. those who experience the change generated by the activity under analysis.
The extent to which the value generated by the intervention can be quantified through a perspective that reconciles the qualitative and the more distinctly quantitative dimensions makes the SROI a very useful tool for measuring its effects on the community, starting with the key players in the process.