



Getting older users involved: the experience of AGE Platform Europe



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AGE Platform Europe

Voicing the needs and concerns of older people in Europe

- ❖ **Bringing older people's point of view in the European policies' debates**, regarding the most important dossiers for people aged 50+, such as social protection and pension reforms, anti-discrimination, employment, social inclusion, ICT, health, research, accessible mobility and build environment,
 - **150 Members** from all over Europe
 - **14 Task Forces** (Accessibility of build environment, transport and ICT, Healthy Ageing, Dignified Ageing, Consumer's rights, ...)
- ❖ **Raising awareness on the users' needs and wishes**, on the principle and practice of users' involvement, in order to add value to the European research, to industrial production, to the service provision and policy-making.
 - Involvement in EU projects (Advisory Boards, User Fora, pilot visits, ...)
 - @ Policy level (EU lobbying, campaigns, e.g. solidarity between generations, age-friendly environments, European Parliament Intergroup on Ageing, ...)
- ❖ **Pooling with other European NGOs and stakeholders**: facing the challenges brought by the demographic change by working together and by sharing the rationale that nothing can be done without the involvement and consent of those the action is addressed to ("*nothing for us without us*").

Who is old?

- No surprise! We age since we are born
- A very heterogenous group with very different needs and perspectives:

“Older people are a totally **heterogeneous group** and that is a vital point to learn. You have those who continue to decide on their daily living and those who at the same age have given up. You have those who will grasp the tele-control and flick through the channels and those who leave it in the drawer preferring to push the button”.

Angela Cluzel, AGE Expert on the occasion of the AALIANCE Final Conference, Malaga, March 2010

- “When I'm 64”: different ages, different needs... changing in time and space (older people in 1964 had some different priorities and wishes than older people now)

A win-win situation



- Involving the users in processes and decisions:
 - From the outset, since the first planning/design/brainstorming, till the access to the market
 - Including the largest variety of users possible
 - Compling with the principles of user engagement (AGE brochure)
- Designed-for-all products and services:
 - A way for enhancing the usability for all
 - A way of disposing of wider markets and reinforcing competition
 - A way of improving the quality of life of the (supporting the development of a) whole society



Involving, (em)powering A win-win situation

For older people

- ✓ Participation allows to increase the sense of ownership
- ✓ It reduces the feeling of being exploited by research
- ✓ It enhances social participation
- ✓ It contributes to the development of skills of older people
- ✓ It allows to keep at pace with (the) research developments and innovation
- ✓ It helps the users understand their role in the process, technology and methodology used

For researchers

- ✓ Participation ensures researchers understand users better
- ✓ It forces researchers and beneficiaries to speak the same language
- ✓ It explores ways to bring users in the discussion: engaging users means acquiring efficiency, efficacy and consistency, while late involvement often means a high risk that the feedback from the users will not be implemented
- ✓ It reduces the gap between research and practice
- ✓ It encourages the consensus between/within stakeholders
- ✓ It helps achieve better research results, encompassing hard-to-reach groups
- ✓ It facilitates user/society acceptance and therefore business development of innovation

For society

- ✓ Participation of beneficiaries diminishes the risk of ageism
- ✓ Research priorities reflect those of users, ensuring that money and resources are not wasted on research with little or no relevance
- ✓ Increase real impact of research on society
- ✓ Improve services and products (i.e. accessibility) for the benefit of society as a whole



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For a Guide on User Involvement

AGE is working on a **practical guide to user involvement** with the scope of highlighting the challenges deriving from engaging with the final beneficiaries in all decision-making processes.

- ❖ What is a genuine user involvement?
- ❖ What are its benefits and to whom are they addressed?
- ❖ Which level of involvement, for which group and for which task? Which methodologies and timing?
- ❖ What are the most important challenges to real participation? (recruitment and heterogeneity of the group, time schedules, language barriers, venues, finances, ...)
- ❖ What are the ethical concerns at stake (« do not harm », dignity, integrity, informed consent, privacy, ...)?

For practices of User Involvement

❖ **INNOVAGE- Social Innovation promoting active and healthy ageing**

AGE has released the **INNOVAGE guidelines on user involvement** for social innovation (available [on-line](#)) aimed at facilitating involvement of older users in the social innovation process. The Guidelines are based on literature findings and also on their experience of working with older people in the framework of INNOVAGE and other European research projects.



innovAge
SOCIAL INNOVATIONS PROMOTING ACTIVE AND HEALTHY AGEING

❖ **ENGAGED- Community for Active and Healthy Ageing**

Involving EU stakeholders in a sustainable network on innovation and age-friendly environments, promoting the transferability of evidence about what works and what does not, supporting **regions to implement innovative** models, tools and services.



ENGAGED
COMMUNITY FOR ACTIVE AND HEALTHY AGEING

❖ **Age-Friendly Environments Campaign and Thematic Network (AFE-INNOVNET)**

Pooling interested stakeholders (public and private authorities at all levels, users, researchers, business stakeholders, ...) in a comprehensive and participated network for sharing solutions to common challenges; towards a **Covenant** of local and regional authorities **on Demographic Change...**



AFE-INNOVNET
TOWARDS AN
AGE-FRIENDLY EUROPE



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