

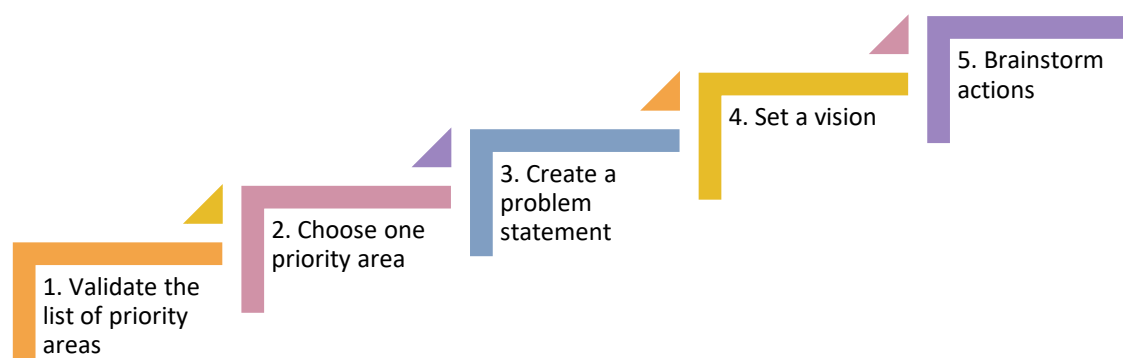


AGEFLAG POLICY LAB: OUTCOMES

AIM OF THE WORKSHOP

The overall aim of the AgeFLAG initiative is to contribute to the wellbeing and health of older adults and, therefore, to make the societies in the Northern Dimension area more inclusive. A joint workshop named "Policy Lab", which was organized on February 4-5, 2021, brought together representatives from the AgeFLAG partner countries, Norway, Germany and relevant international organizations. Through using collaborative methods to **agree on the most opportune intervention points where benefit can be brought to the older adults in the region**, input for the regional roadmap was developed during the Policy Lab.

STEPS OF THE WORKSHOP



PRIORITY AREA FOR JOINT ACTION

In 2020, each participating country held a national needs assessment during which top five national needs were identified. Based on these national needs, four priority areas for future joint activities to improve health and wellbeing of the ageing population could be defined.

These areas are:

- **Healthy ageing, wellbeing, social environment, and social connections**
- **Health, social and integrated care**
- **Education, knowledge, and life-long learning**
- **Labour participation**

The first task of the Policy Lab workshop was to **validate these four priorities** by deciding whether they are understandable and specific enough and whether they reflect the national needs, and by evaluating whether there is something missing from the current list of priorities. The next step (task 2) was to **prioritize one joint need to focus on during the workshop**. The main criteria for deciding were:

1. the existence of need/potential for cooperation,
2. added value of regional dimension,
3. clear connection with national priorities,
4. potential for impact,
5. necessity for action,
6. (personal) interest towards the topic, and
7. availability of relevant capacity and knowledge.

As an outcome of group work, presentations/discussions and finally, individual voting, the participants chose **healthy ageing, wellbeing, social environment, and social connections** as the priority area for the roadmap. Therefore, all the subsequent activities (drafting a problem statement, setting a vision, and brainstorming activities) in the workshop were taken with the specific priority area kept in mind. The same steps can be followed to envision future joint action in the other priority areas if there are interest and resources for this.

PROBLEMS TO SOLVE TOGETHER

Based on the previously chosen priority area, the participants were asked to explore the main needs in this area and to **define the problem** that should be solved together in the joint AgeFLAG action plan. As a result of group work, the most mentioned issues related to the problem were: **ageism (i.e., negative social attitudes towards older people (also by themselves), their role in the society and their capabilities), the deterioration of health and functional abilities, the lack of knowledge and cooperation for designing age-friendly environments and services, social exclusion, social and financial insecurity, and digital and health illiteracy.**

Many of these aspects relate to the challenges posed by COVID-19, which were specifically emphasized by one of the workshop's working groups. It was discussed that the COVID-19 pandemic clearly highlights the already defined root problem(s), as it has revealed and amplified the most vulnerable aspects of the social and physical wellbeing of older adults.

ANTICIPATED CHANGE

After exploring the problems, the participants of the workshop were asked to **envision the future**: that is, what kind of change they wish to see. They were expected to describe what the situation would be like in three years after working together on joint activities. As the **overall goal is strongly related to increasing functional ability of older adults**, the more specific keywords emphasized during the discussions can be divided into four main areas of change:

- **Creation of age-friendly environments:** creation and provision of person-centred services (nursing care and health care), age-friendly infrastructure, services designed with the needs of older adults kept in mind, cooperation with service providers to support the design of these services, age-friendly digital tools, and increased intersectoral cooperation in service design and provision.

- **Increased positive public attitudes:** decreased ageism and stigmas, positive attitudes towards ageing, increased knowledge about subjective age, better intergenerational connections, use of media to nudge attitudes and raise awareness.
- **Increased social inclusion:** age-friendly access to and flexibility of the labour market, sociability and meaningful activities, digital services that promote empowerment, improved living conditions, the participation of older adults in policymaking, cooperation with non-governmental organisations and councils to engage older adults, better intergenerational connections.
- **Improved competencies (skills and knowledge):** increased digital and health literacy among older adults, increased knowledge about subjective age among professionals, better knowledge about healthy ageing and the importance of building up social capital throughout the life course, sharing user friendly and reliable information to older adults.

Participants were also asked to think about whose problems can be solved through joint activities, i.e., what is the main target group. Several different stakeholders were named: health professionals (incl GPs), service providers, social workers, older adults themselves, individuals with special needs (cognitive disabilities, dementia), local authorities, and NGOs.

PROPOSED JOINT ACTIVITIES

Based on the stated problems and the anticipated change, the participants were asked to brainstorm possible joint activities to carry out in order to make the change happen during the upcoming (three) years. In general, these activities can be divided into three main categories:

- **Data gathering, information pooling and dissemination.**
- **Cooperation facilitation.**
- **Tools and interventions.**

Some of the activities that were mentioned during the workshop are listed below.

Data gathering, information pooling and dissemination:

- Literature review, mapping existing activities, gathering data and information, agreeing on methodology;
- Examining the existing national solutions to the identified problems and learning about the national surveillance mechanisms;
- Creating an inventory of best practices;
- Preparing a policy brief for local authorities, including instructions for interventions;
- Preparing a policy brief on the importance of building up social capital throughout the life course;
- Conducting a study on how healthy diet and exercise may improve well-being and functionality of senior citizens with uniformity in the study methodology and sampling in each country;
- Raising awareness among policy makers about the importance of availability of spaces and services for positive social and physical activity where intergenerational connections can be fostered;
- Influencing political agendas through presenting at the Northern Dimension Forum.

Facilitation of cooperation:

- Cooperation with NGOs to increase the understanding of the needs of older adults and to engage them in activities (systematic cooperation as well as organizing workshops together);

- Creation of a working network of critical stakeholders (e.g., doctors, NGOs, councils, representatives of older adults and other professionals) for joint discussions and co-creation;
- Cooperation with service providers to support the design of age-friendly services;
- Cooperation with WHO;
- Cooperation between project partners.

Tools and interventions:

- Guidelines for media on how to portray older people and ageing in a positive way;
- Preparing a toolkit and visual infographics for stakeholders and beneficiaries;
- Joint guidelines for older people;
- Translation of publications and messages in local languages;
- Raising digital competence among older people/continuous digital education;
- Train older people to help others;
- Courses/activities/initiatives that bring together people from different generations;
- Develop a repository of promising interventions aiming at increasing social activation and intergenerational connections;
- Competition for cities, such as rewarding age-friendly cities;
- Supporting older people's own initiatives;
- Organizing events related to the World Health Day, the International Day of Older Persons and the Decade of Healthy Ageing;
- Create a link to German Health Targets.

The anticipated change described above and the proposed joint activities do not cover everything discussed in the workshop. The detailed **results from each of the working groups of the workshop are presented in Appendix 1 (Policy Lab Miro boards), which can be used as a valuable input for the roadmap.**

INPUT FOR THE FINAL ROADMAP

There are several ways to create a project roadmap. In general, it is beneficial to clearly define a long-term goal together with a few mid-term goals for a future project. Specific activities can be mentioned and elaborated on under each mid-term goal. These can be based on the outcomes of the Policy Lab. The following table presents **an example** of the possible activities that can be carried out to help realise the anticipated change through regional cooperation during the next three years.

Healthy ageing, wellbeing, social environment, and social connections				
Objectives	Creation of age-friendly environments	Increased positive public attitude (decreased ageism and stigmas)	Increased social inclusion	Improved competences (skills and knowledge)
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperation with NGOs and other stakeholders to raise understanding of the needs of older adults Cooperation with service providers to support inclusive design of age-friendly services Raising awareness among policy makers about the importance of availability of spaces and services for positive social and physical activity through which intergenerational connections can be fostered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation and/or support for inter-generational dialogue and initiatives Guidelines for media on how to portray older adults and ageing Communication initiatives (media campaign, guidelines, storytelling) targeted at older adults Sharing information about subjective age to different stakeholders/target groups Give out yearly "Capital of Intergenerational Synergy" award 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation and/or support for inter-generational dialogue and initiatives Preparing a policy brief on the importance of building up social capital throughout the life course Develop a repository of promising interventions aiming increasing social activation and intergenerational connections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing evidence-based knowledge on how healthy diet and exercise may improve well-being and functionality of older adults Creating and disseminating an inventory of best practices (mapping existing activities, promising initiatives and national policies) Initiatives to increase health and digital literacy of older adults Translation of publications and messages to local languages Preparing a policy brief for local authorities, including instructions for interventions

Roadmap to improve the health and well-being of the ageing population in the Baltic Sea Region (AgeFLAG)

Deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Older adult Personas that can be used in service design▪ Guidelines for creating services/ infrastructure for older adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Guidelines for media▪ Media campaign for older adults▪ Design for a regional inter-generational initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ A Policy brief on social capital▪ A repository of interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Inventory of best practices▪ A study and/or a policy brief▪ Design for a regional initiative to increase health and/or digital literacy
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