

Assessing the needs of regions, cities and towns regarding a European initiative supporting age-friendly environments

Findings of survey conducted under the D4 Action Group of the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing



ABOUT THIS SURVEY

This document presents the main findings of a survey on the needs and expectations of towns, cities and regions regarding European support to age-friendly environments. The survey was conducted by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), AGE Platform Europe and EUROCITIES as a follow up to the European Year 2012 for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations. It results from a commitment made by these organisations under the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (EIP-AHA).

BACKGROUND

The survey was conducted via an online questionnaire available in five languages¹ and circulated broadly from from October 2012 to January 2013 (see Annex I).

255 respondents from the following entities (self-identified) replied to the questionnaire:

- 81 cities
- 47 regions
- 31 towns
- 96 from other types of organisations (NGOs, associations, universities, etc.)

The results of this survey will feed into the 'Age-friendly environments in Europe' (AFEE) project conducted by the WHO-Europe for the European Commission. Findings will also be used to inform discussions in the framework of the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (EIP-AHA) and its goal of setting up a European Initiative to support age-friendly environments.

As such, this analysis focuses on responses received from cities, regions and towns which were the main target groups of the questionnaire. The responses are analysed according to the type of entity (towns, cities, regions)². Findings are presented by entity type and some general trends are identified.

Disclaimer: the results show some indicative trends based on analysis of collected data. An in-depth research on the validity of the answers (if respondents were from the administrations they claim to represent) or contradictions in some responses from the same entity have not been verified. There was no glossary or definition of terms provided in the questionnaire so the analysis does not take into account varying interpretations or meanings for terms used such as 'city', 'town', 'environment', 'social inclusion', etc.

¹ English, French, German, Italian, Spanish. AGE partners from Finland also collected responses in Finnish.

² No definition of 'town', 'city' or 'region' was provided in the questionnaire and each respondent was invited to classify their own entity/organisation.



RESULTS

General findings

- ✓ **Becoming an age-friendly environment is high on the agenda of a majority of towns, cities and regions that responded to the survey.**
- ✓ The biggest obstacle for becoming age-friendly is **lack of funding**. Other problem areas include lack of coordination among levels of government and political commitment in this field.
- ✓ **Sharing of good practices** and **providing information on funding** are the highest ranked potential activities for a EU-wide initiative on active ageing.
- ✓ Other activities that score highly among respondents include:
 - For cities: organising formats of learning between practitioners from cities and regions;
 - For regions: securing the commitment of politicians;
 - For towns and other organisations: support in assessing the situation of older people.
- ✓ **Adapting public space** is the area where there is highest convergence between interest and political competences of towns and cities – for regions, it is **Social inclusion**
- ✓ **Environmental** issues is the area that receives least interest when it comes to age-friendliness

Detailed findings

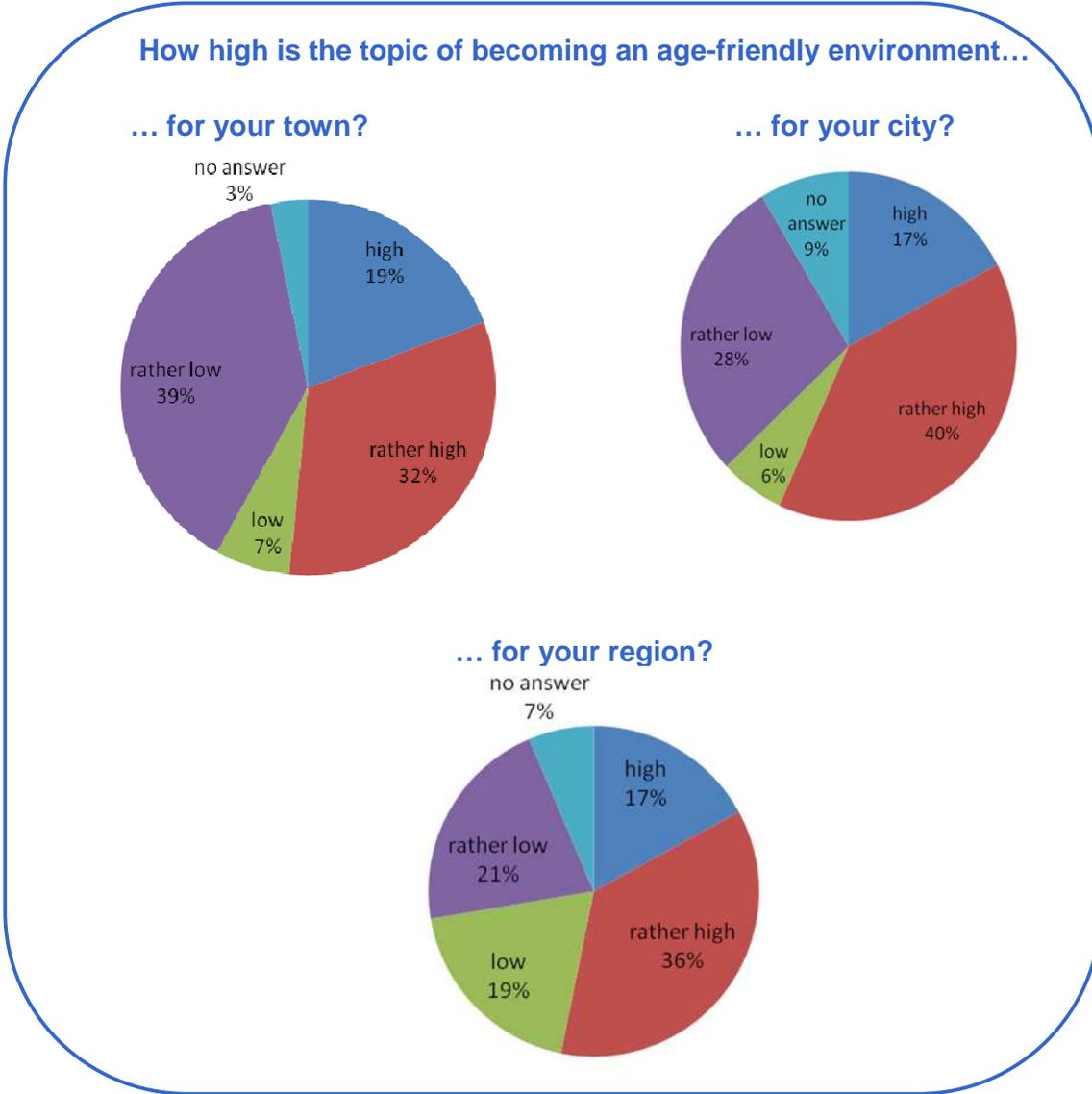
1. Age-friendly environments on the agenda

Respondents were asked to rank how high the topic of becoming an age-friendly environment is on their agendas.

- ✓ **130 respondents (half overall) say that becoming an age-friendly environment is high or rather high in their region's / city's / town's agenda**
 - Of these, over half of responding cities (46), regions (25) and towns (16) signal that becoming an age-friendly environment is a high or rather high on their agenda .
- ✓ **100 respondents indicate that the topic is low or rather low in their region's / city's / town's agenda**
 - Of these, just under half of responding towns (14), 40% of the regions (18), and about a third of the cities (27) say that becoming an age-friendly environment is low or rather low priority on their agenda.



- ✓ Three graphs below illustrate these findings by entity



2. Problems to become age-friendly

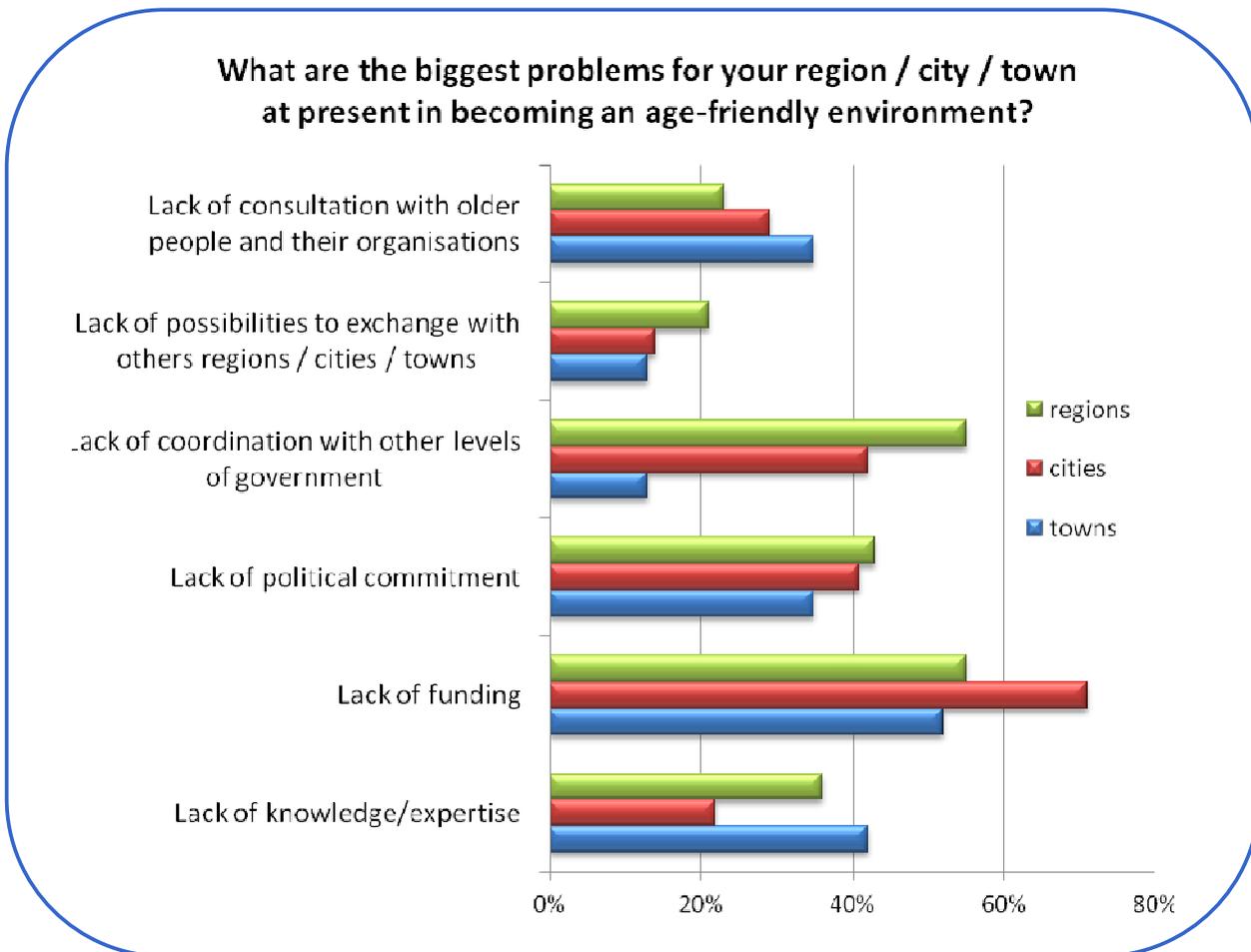
Respondents were asked to choose, from a list, the biggest problems they faced in becoming an age-friendly environment.

- ✓ **Lack of funding is the biggest obstacle to becoming age-friendly. This fact is confirmed by a wide majority of all survey respondents**
- ✓ For over half of the regions (55%) and just under half of the cities (41%), coordination with other levels of governments rates as the second highest problem for becoming age-friendly, after funding



- ✓ Respondents from towns and other organisations identify lack of knowledge and expertise as the second biggest problem, after funding
 - ✓ Political commitment also scores highly as a problem area for regions (43%), cities (41%), towns (35%) and other organisations (34%).
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- ✓ **Of least concern to respondents is the possibility to exchange with other regions, cities and towns**
 - ✓ Other problems mentioned by individual respondents include:
 - Lack of citizen and older people involvement
 - Lack of integrated/transversal approach in ageing policies
 - Lack of awareness and understanding of age-friendly environment concept

The graph below outlines illustrates these answers by the public authorities that replied to the survey



3. EU-level activities

Respondents were asked to choose the activities that should be developed by an EU-wide initiative to meet their needs on active ageing.

- ✓ The activity which scored the highest is **sharing of good practice**, with a wide majority of respondents choosing it as focus for an EU-wide initiative.
- ✓ Over half of respondents from regions and cities and just under half from towns selected **providing information on funding** as an activity of interest.
- ✓ Also important for respondents (43% regions, 41% cities and under one third of towns and organisations) is the **organisation of learning between practitioners from cities and regions**.
- ✓ Over one third of respondents indicate that it would be useful to have an activity to support them in **assessing the situation of older people in their town/city/region**.
- ✓ **Securing the commitment of politicians** (e.g. through a signature or formally joining an initiative) **ranks highly among respondents from regions** (49%) but less so among those from cities, towns and other organisations (36%, 19% and 34% respectively).

4. Interests and political competences related to age-friendliness

Respondents were asked to indicate their interests and political competencies related to areas of age-friendliness (adapting transport, adapting housing, social inclusion, participation, employment, communication/access to information, community support and health services, environmental issues)

- ✓ The highest ranked area where 41% of cities and 32 % of towns indicate have both interest and political competences is **adapting public space**.
- ✓ For regions, the area with highest correlation between interest and competence is **social inclusion**, with 23% having both interest and political competences in this field.
- ✓ The areas where there is lowest correlation between interest and competence for cities, regions and towns are **employment** and **environmental** issues.
- ✓ The areas with highest interest are:
 - For cities: participation
 - For regions: adapting public space
 - For towns: adapting transport
 - For other respondents: community support and health services
- ✓ 'Environmental issues' is ranked by respondents as the area of lowest interest
- ✓ Other areas of interest mentioned by respondents are:
 - Open spaces
 - Leisure
 - Informal education and life-long-learning
 - Digital inclusion
 - Long-term care



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ANNEX I– questionnaire

Dear colleagues,

Local and regional authorities (LRAs) across the EU are faced with increasing demands from their ageing populations. At the same time the economic situation is deteriorating and creates additional challenges for LRAs.

To support LRAs, we are currently exploring the feasibility of launching an EU initiative to promote age-friendly environments.

According to WHO, the physical and social environments are key determinants of whether people can remain healthy, independent and autonomous long into their old age. Promoting age-friendly environments (AFE) is one of the most effective approaches for responding to demographic ageing. AFE empower older people to age in better physical and mental health, promote their social inclusion and active participation and help them maintain their autonomy and a good quality of life in their old age. AFE enable older workers to remain at work for longer, lower the pressure on traditional care and assistance and boost the economy through demand for innovative solutions. AFE are best developed with an active participation of older people.

We would like therefore to invite you to take part in a short **online survey** that we conduct among EUROCITIES, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions and the Age Platform Europe about your challenges and support needs to becoming **age-friendly municipalities, cities and regions**.

The survey will not take you more than 10 minutes and can be accessed here in English, French, Italian, Spanish and German:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/agefriendly>

The results of this survey will feed into the discussions we are currently running with the European Commission and the World Health Organisation in the framework of the [European Innovation partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing](#) on setting up a **European Initiative to support age-friendly environments** as one of the outcomes of the European Year 2012 on Active Ageing and intergenerational solidarity.

As we find it very important to get a picture of the actual needs and expectations of actors on the ground regarding European support, we would really appreciate your input.

If you are not the colleague who is dealing with this subject in your organization, please feel free to forward the survey link to your colleague. Do not hesitate either to circulate this questionnaire to other municipalities, cities and regions. The more answers we get, the better our analysis will be.

The deadline to answer is: 15 November 2012

With best regards,

Anne-Sophie Parent, AGE Platform Europe
Christina Dziewanska-Stringer, Council of European Municipalities and Regions
Ana Feder, EUROCITIES

If you have any questions and remarks regarding this survey, please contact Ana.Feder@eurocities.eu

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Assessing the needs of regions, cities and towns regarding a European Initiative supporting age-friendly environments

Situation in your region/city/town

1. How high is the topic of becoming an age-friendly environment on your region's / city's / town's agenda?

- Low
- Rather low
- Rather high
- High

2. What are the biggest problems for your region / city / town at present in becoming an age-friendly environment?

- Lack of knowledge/expertise
- Lack of funding
- Lack of political commitment
- Lack of coordination with other levels of government
- Lack of possibilities to exchange with others regions/cities/towns
- Lack of consultation with older people and their organizations

Other (please specify):

Your priorities for a European initiative on Age-friendly region/cities/towns

3. Which ACTIVITIES should an EU-wide initiative on active ageing include to meet the needs of your region/city/town?

- Organisation formats for learning between practioners from cities and regions (e.g. peer reviews)
- Securing the commitment of politicians (e.g. through a signature of formally joining the initiative)
- Support in assessing the situation of older people in your regions/city/town has in place
- Sharing good practice (database, etc.)
- Providing information on funding

Other (please specify):

4. Please indicate the INTERESTS and POLITICAL COMPETENCIES related to age-friendliness your region / city / town has in the areas below

Interested in

Have political competencies in

Adapting public space and public buildings

Adapting transport

Adapting housing

Social Inclusion



Participation

Employment

Communication and access
to information

Community support and
health services

Environmental issues

Do you have other areas of interest?

Information about your region/city/town

5. Which type of entity do you work for?

Regions

City

Town

Other (please specify):

6. What is the name of your region/city/municipality

7. Which state is your entity located in?

8. Please leave us your name and email address if you would like to hear about the further developments regarding a European initiative to promote age-friendly cities, regions and towns.

Name:

Entity (Municipality, region,...):

Email Address:

