



# PAAR-Net White Paper 2

## Health, Care & Support: Co-creating Better Futures with Older Adults

Practical insights for Practitioners, Researchers, and Policymakers

**This white paper calls for action:**

- **Challenge ageism and power imbalances.**
- **Embed co-creation in research, practice, and policy.**
- **Equip professionals with the skills and tools to collaborate meaningfully with older adults.**



This White Paper was co-created by  
over

**30+ researchers and  
practitioners from  
14 countries,**

drawing on:

- **12 case studies** exploring participation with migrants, Indigenous elders, and marginalised older adults in diverse community contexts.
- **Cross-country workshops** bringing together academics, practitioners, policymakers, and older adults.
- **Participatory discussions** with older people from migrant, Indigenous, rural, and minority communities.
- It synthesises **lived experiences, policy reviews, and practical examples** to provide actionable insights for community-level change.



## Co-creating Better Futures with Older Adults

In many European countries, over 25% of older adults report feeling socially isolated (WHO, 2022).



Older migrants make up more than **10%** of the older adult population in several EU member states (Eurostat, 2023).



Indigenous and minority elders face **significantly higher barriers** to accessing community health and participation programmes (WHO, 2022).



## What we learn in white paper two

Older adults — especially those from migrant, Indigenous, and marginalised communities — bring essential knowledge about how to make communities **inclusive, culturally relevant, and resilient**. Practitioners and researchers can strengthen their work by **co-creating with older adults** to design programmes and policies that reflect real-world needs.

Older adults are co-creators and active contributors, not passive recipients of care.  
To make health, care, and support systems truly inclusive and effective, policymakers must:

- ✓ Embed participatory approaches in policy and practice.
  - ✓ Co-develop shared standards and practical toolkits that guide meaningful involvement.
  - ✓ Ensure older adults' voices are visible and influential in shaping decisions across countries, sectors, and disciplines.
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# Co-creating Better Futures with Older Adults

**Learning for  
Practitioners and  
Researchers**








## → Challenges

- 
**Difficulty engaging migrants and minority elders**  
 Barriers such as language, trust, and cultural disconnect limit participation.
- Insufficient intersectional practice**  
 Struggling to design engagement that addresses overlapping disadvantages (age, gender, ethnicity, income).
- 
**Access barriers**  
 Reaching older adults in remote or underserved areas, or those with limited literacy, remains challenging. Specifically called out in multiple contributions (Slovenia, Bosnia, Portugal).
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**Tokenistic involvement**  
 Consultation fatigue among older adults due to one-off or poorly structured engagement that doesn't lead to change.
- 
**Fragmented collaboration**  
 Weak connections between researchers, practitioners, and grassroots organisations limit sustainability. Collaboration noted as a gap between academia, practice, and community networks.
- 
**Engaging migrants and minority elders**  
 explicitly referenced as a systemic gap (e.g., Luxembourg, France, Austria contributions).
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**Intersectionality**  
 Repeatedly highlighted as a cross-cutting challenge (especially for women, rural, and low-income elders).
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**Measuring impact**  
 specifically cited as need for participatory evaluation frameworks

## → Opportunities

- 
**Co-design with diverse older adults**  
 Collaborate with migrants, minority elders, and marginalised groups to develop culturally relevant participation methods and programmes (e.g., Luxembourg migrant networks, France's Citizen Design).
- 
**Use culturally adapted engagement tools**  
 Integrate frameworks like Māori wellbeing measures, multilingual materials, and culturally responsive facilitation techniques into practice.
- 
**Embed intersectionality into project design**  
 Apply methods that consider age, gender, ethnicity, income, and disability to address overlapping disadvantages.
- 
**Partner with grassroots and faith-based organisations**  
 Work with trusted local actors to reach isolated or excluded older adults (as seen in Austria, Slovenia, and Spain).
- 
**Strengthen inter-disciplinary collaboration**  
 Build cross-sector teams (health, housing, social care, education) to tackle complex community challenges.
- 
**Apply participatory evaluation**  
 Use frameworks like the PIRIT Toolkit to measure impact with both quantitative and qualitative methods, making outcomes visible to funders and communities.
- 
**Scale participatory "hubs"**  
 Develop Living Labs and intergenerational councils as ongoing spaces for collaboration between researchers, practitioners, and older adults.

# Implementation Imperatives

To make these opportunities real, practioners and researchers can ...



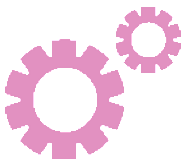
**Map and engage stakeholders early:** Use participatory mapping and narrative interviews (e.g., Luxembourg migrant networks) to identify older adults from migrant, minority, rural, and other marginalised communities at the project outset.



**Co-design from the outset:** Involve older adults as equal partners in setting priorities, designing methods, and interpreting results using co-created tools like personas (e.g., France's Citizen Design approach) to reflect complex lived experiences.



**Make participation accessible:** Provide translation, transport, flexible meeting formats, and culturally familiar venues (e.g., Slovenia's multilingual community workshops) to reduce practical barriers.



**Build your own cultural competence:** Take training in intercultural communication, trauma-informed practice, and culturally adapted engagement methods (e.g., Māori wellbeing frameworks in New Zealand, trauma-informed facilitation in Germany).



**Partner with trusted intermediaries:** Work with community mediators — such as faith leaders, cultural organisations, or volunteers (e.g., Austria's collaboration with grassroots migrant support groups) to reach excluded older adults and build trust.



**Embed intersectionality in practice:** Use layered data collection (age, gender, ethnicity, income) and co-create frameworks with participants (e.g., Roma inclusion initiatives in Spain) to design equitable, culturally relevant solutions.



**Adopt participatory evaluation:** Use tools like the PIRIT Toolkit and combine quantitative data with storytelling (e.g., Austria and Spain's mixed-method evaluations) to measure and communicate impact.



**Foster inter-disciplinary collaboration:** Bring together health, housing, social care, and education professionals (e.g., Portugal's cross-sector public health planning teams) with older adult representatives to address complex community challenges.



**Document and share what works:** Publish findings and participatory methods (e.g., Netherlands' Living Lab reports) in formats accessible to both communities and academic audiences, enabling wider adoption.



# Co-creating Better Futures with Older Adults

**Learnings for Policymakers**





## Challenges



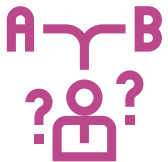
### Belonging and identity gaps

Community programmes often fail to recognise older adults' cultural identities, worldviews, and sense of place.



### Cultural and linguistic exclusion

Migrants, Indigenous peoples, and minority elders face barriers due to language, cultural disconnect, or lack of representation in local decision-making.



### Weak community infrastructure

Limited local networks, underfunded grassroots organisations, and poor inter-agency collaboration restrict sustained involvement.



### Intersectional disadvantages

Overlapping barriers (e.g., age + gender + ethnicity + poverty) compound exclusion, especially for women, rural residents, and minority groups.



### Disconnect between local and national policy

Community voices are often not translated into policy, creating a gap between participation and tangible change.



## Opportunities



### Co-create culturally relevant approaches

Work with migrants, indigenous elders, and minority groups to design methods and programmes that respect their traditions, worldviews, and languages.



### Strengthen local networks and infrastructures

Build partnerships with grassroots organisations, faith communities, and neighbourhood associations to expand engagement and build trust.



### Embed intersectionality into design

Create community initiatives that address overlapping barriers that account for age, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. (e.g., for older women migrants in rural areas).



### Develop participatory governance models

Create advisory boards, intergenerational councils, and Living Labs where older adults co-lead local decisions.

### Use participatory evaluation



Apply frameworks that capture both qualitative (stories, cultural insights) and quantitative outcomes, making findings useful to communities and policymakers alike.



### Scale what works

Expand successful models like intergenerational councils, culturally adapted community hubs, and local participatory policy forums across regions.



# Implementation Imperatives

To make these opportunities real, policymakers can ...



**Invest in belonging:** Fund programmes co-designed with migrants and minority older adults ensuring they reflect cultural values and local realities.



**Measure what matters:** Require evaluations that combine data with lived experience and use findings to improve programmes and justify investment.



**Make participation accessible:** Mandate multilingual, culturally adapted consultations and services so no older adult is left out of decision-making.



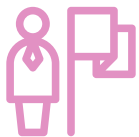
**Bridge local to national:** Create mechanisms so local voices via community-level engagement directly influence national ageing, migration, and inclusion strategies.



**Share decision making power locally:** Establish participatory governance structures, from Living Labs to intergenerational councils, where older adults influence health, housing, and community planning decisions.



**Tie funding to engagement:** Make older adult participation a requirement for public commissioning in health, social care, and urban development.



**Strengthen the grassroots:** Provide sustainable funding for community organisations and networks that anchor engagement at the local level.



**Use better data for fairer policy:** Collect and apply intersectional data to design policies that work for those facing the greatest barriers.













**Grow local capacity:** Train practitioners, community leaders, and older adults in participatory and culturally responsive methods.



**Lead collaboratively:** Convene cross-sector teams (health, housing, transport, social care) with older adult representatives to co-create integrated solutions.

# Case Studies – rich insights from ...

	Country	1: Culturally Relevant Participation	1: Culturally Relevant Participation (Additional Insight)	2: Engaging Migrants & Minority Elders	3: Strengthening Local Networks & Grassroots Partnerships	4: Safe & Trauma-Informed Participation	5: From Participation to Policy Influence
	Austria	Caritas Elder Abuse Prevention Project	Caritas Elder Abuse Prevention Project		Caritas Faith-Based Outreach	Caritas Elder Abuse Prevention	Caritas Faith-Based Outreach
	Estonia				Intergenerational Committees		Intergenerational Municipal Committees
	France	Citizen Design for Diversity	Citizen Design for Diversity	Citizen Design for Diversity		Citizen Design for Diversity	Citizen Design for Diversity
	Germany	Trauma-Informed Elder Engagement	Trauma-Informed Elder Engagement			Trauma-Informed Elder Engagement	
	Luxembourg			Migrant Networks Mapping		Migrant Networks Mapping	
	Netherlands						Living Labs in Long-Term Care
	New Zealand	Māori Wellbeing Framework				Māori Wellbeing Framework	Māori Wellbeing Framework
	Portugal	Public Health Co-Creation Labs	Public Health Co-Creation Labs	Public Health Co-Creation Labs	Public Health Co-Creation Labs	Inclusive Public Health Co-Planning	Public Health Co-Creation Labs
	Slovenia	Community Health Access Workshops	Community Health Access Workshops	Community Health Access Workshops	Community Health Access Workshops	Community Health Access Workshops	
	Spain	Roma Inclusion Initiatives		Roma Inclusion	Roma Inclusion Events	Roma Inclusion Events	