



10th European Week of Regions and Cities Brussels 8 - 11 October 2012

Workshop report

Code of the Workshop: 09A12

Title of the Workshop: European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing: The Opportunity for Regions

Date and time:

09 October 2012

11:15-13:00

Organiser/leader:

European Commission: DG REGIO, DG SANCO, DG CONNECT

Chair/moderator:

Mr. John Walsh, EC, DG REGIO, Thematic Coordination & Innovation, Deputy Head of Unit

Speakers:

Ms. Maria Iglesia Gomez, EC, DG SANCO, Innovation for Health and Consumers, Head of Unit

Mr. Ilias Iakovidis, EC, DG CONNECT, Digital Social Platform, Acting Head of Unit

Mr. Jo Vandeurzen, Minister for Welfare, Health and Family Affairs, Flemish Government, Belgium

Mr. Manuel Varela Rey, General Director of Innovation and Public Health Management, Ministry of Health (Xunta de Galicia), Spain

Mr. Ard Van der Tuuk, Member of the board of the Provincial Council, Province of Drenthe, the Netherlands

Outline: This workshop addressed how innovation can contribute in resolving the long-term challenge of an ageing population in the EU through showcasing regional examples of smart specialisation innovation strategies using funds from the cohesion programmes. This gathering of stakeholders served as a sounding board to engage regions and municipalities in the European Innovation Partnership on Active & Healthy Ageing (EIP).

Debate/Panel discussion:

Mr. John Walsh highlighted the healthy level of participation from regions and municipalities attending the event and made introductory remarks on the future funding in Structural funds; with competitive regions set to earmark 80% of their Structural Funds on innovation, research, renewable energy, efficiency and the digital agenda. Less developed regions should earmark 44% of Structural Funds for those investments.

Ms. Maria Iglesia Gomez recapped the target of the EIP is to increase by 2 the average healthy life years by 2020. Stakeholders across the EU committed themselves to be engaged in action groups, or presented as candidate reference sites. The goal of EIP is to convert the challenge of an ageing society into a positive opportunity for innovation and economic growth for European regions.

Mr. Ilias Iakovidis stressed the importance of financial planning today and harnessing the potential of structural funds for regions and municipalities in order to have in place the infrastructures and networks necessary for the next 10 years.

Mr. Jo Vandeurzen outlined how Flanders' Care mission sought to raise the quality of care through innovation and responsible entrepreneurship. He emphasized the importance of using existing policy instruments in a coordinated

way throughout the innovation cycle to scale up from demonstration projects. He noted that given that regions face similar challenges, greater synergies were required between them. He cited the benefits of CORAL (Community of Regions for Assisted Living), a network of European regions geared to exchanging policy views and experiences and international benchmarking, which has led to a further inter-regional network, the CASA project "Regions for Smart Living", an INTERREG IVC project. Finally, he stressed the need for clear cross-sectoral commitments from politicians, suggesting a changing mind-set of administrators in order to bring innovation into practice and incentivise stakeholders.

Mr. Ard Van der Tuuk described how today older people have a greater ICT maturation, but that the interface experience can be improved. He cited Northern Netherlands initiatives, principally the Healthy Ageing Network Northern Netherlands (HANNN), a broad network of stakeholders that has forged tighter links between entrepreneurs, researchers, educators and government authorities. Further collaboration opportunities mentioned included the ScanBalt network and iAge projects (INTERREG IV B project), the work in those projects would lead to an increase in regional economic development and decrease of healthcare spending.

Mr. Manuel Varela Rey detailed Galicia's strategy to strengthen regional competitiveness by developing existing know-how, combining infrastructure developments and stimulating companies' innovative capacity. He cited Galicia's use of innovative use of ICT, exemplified by the region's H2050 project (hospital of the future) (ERDF project), as a smart use of regional funds to drive health care innovations that engages all stakeholders and that cut costs of care. He emphasized that regions should be using solutions that are already there and deploy those solutions as good practices in the health service.

Conclusions: In summation, John Walsh commented that not all regions are at the same level of awareness in terms of tackling the ageing challenge, and there will be a shock to come if Europe continues with its current system of care. He added regions do not need to reinvent the wheel, and should now prioritize system integration. He asked the regions to use funds to drive transformational change. Mr. Iakovidis stressed that ageing regions are more competitive and innovative. Ms. Iglesia Gomez tellingly remarked that now was the moment to move beyond the pilot schemes already in place and to confront national ministers and prime ministers with the solutions to generate the political will and secure the funding for implementing these initiatives for real.

More information, links:

EIP on AHA Marketplace: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/eipaha/>

Flanders Care: <http://flanders-care.be/en/>

CORAL: <http://www.linkedin.com/groups/CORAL-Community-Regions-Assisted-Living-3701312/about>

CASA - Regions for Smart Living: <http://www.casa-europe.eu/>

Healthy Ageing Network Northern Netherlands (HANNN): <http://www.hannn.eu/en/home/>

iAge: <http://www.iageproject.eu/>

Galicia Health Service (SERGAS), H2050 project:

http://www.galiciasaude.es/MostrarContidos_N2_T01.aspx?IdPaxina=60434

Twitter (for quotes or reference): <https://twitter.com/i/#!/search?q=%23eipopendays>

"Maria Iglesia Gomez says that the innovations are here. We need to put it on the political agenda. We need to do something now!" Petra Hasselqvist – Senior Advisor and Project Manager at the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (twitter)