



WP2. NEW PROFESSIONAL PROFILE: PROFESSIONAL OF REFERENCE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGE-FRIENDLY CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



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INTRODUCTION

According to UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) an occupational profile refers to “a description of the knowledge, skills, competences that a professional or worker must have to perform a task competently at the workplace”¹.

The occupational profile therefore emphasises what a prospective practitioner must have learned. The occupational standard and its corresponding occupational profile must be mutually consistent. An occupational standard can be written to include an occupational profile.

NEED FOR AN AGE-FRIENDLY PROFESSIONAL

Ageing affects every aspect of our lives, throughout our lives. In the last five decades, life expectancy at birth has increased by about 10 years for both men and women. The demographic profiles of EU regions vary widely, notably between urban and rural areas, with some places ageing significantly and others expanding their working-age population. Europe is by no means the only continent with an ageing population, but the process is most advanced here. As way of illustration, today’s median age in Europe¹ of 42.5 years is more than double the figure for Africa. This gap will remain large in the coming decades.

This trend is having a significant impact on people’s everyday lives and on our societies. It has implications for economic growth, fiscal sustainability, health and long-term care, well-being and social cohesion. In addition, the pandemic’s disproportionate impact on older people – in terms of hospitalisations and deaths - has highlighted some of the challenges an ageing population poses on health and social care. But ageing also provides new opportunities for creating new jobs, fostering social fairness and boosting prosperity, for instance in the ‘silver’ and care economies.

Member States are addressing the impacts of ageing by improving education and skills systems, encouraging longer and fuller working lives, and advancing reforms of social protection and pension systems. However, given the scale, speed and impact this trend will have across society, we also need to look at **new approaches** and ensure that our policies are fit for purpose in an era of major change – from the twin green and digital transitions to new forms of work and the threat of pandemics.

Ageing and its challenges and opportunities are present throughout our lives but our perspectives change. In the longer term, the prospect of a longer life expectancy than their grandparents’ generation informs many of the choices young people make, including on education, work life, career breaks. This in turn has impacts on their health, and their place in the economy and society. At the same time, today’s older generation brings the contributions, needs and expectations of their lifetime. All together, they form part of a society and economy that needs to ensure prosperity, success and well-being for all its members. Addressing the challenges and opportunities of ageing is therefore an individual and collective responsibility.

¹ TVETipedia Glossary: cited in Final.pdf Quality and Qualifications Ireland, 2020,12)



As discussed in this Green Paper on Ageing (European Commission, 2021), there are many ways of preventing or limiting the negative consequences of ageing on our society. These include promoting healthy and active ageing, improving the resilience of our health and care systems, improving labour market performance, modernising social protection and fostering legal migration and integration as part of a policy mix, striving for higher productivity and efficiency across the board.

The EU can face them with the commitment and engagement of young and older people, fostering intergenerational solidarity and responsibility with enabling policies, and at the same time leading the way in developing a supportive, dynamic society.

In this context, the WHO concept of age-friendly cities and environments takes a multifaceted approach to address the challenges of the global demographic transformation. The concept and the Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities were launched in 2007. Since then, the Network has included over 1.600 cities and communities, and its number is growing every day.²

Becoming a member of the global network includes the commitment to follow a five-year cycle of plan - do - check - act, with which cities and communities are placing steps on the road towards age-friendly and inclusive communities.³

To implement this multifaceted or holistic concept of the WHO's age-friendly cities and communities, local policymakers, civil servants, social workers, healthcare professionals, and housing developers are placed in a challenging position. They need to have the skills and competencies to lead, include and develop strategies and actions between different kinds of stakeholders from different organisations or departments. The professionals need to be the bridge and the initiator to enable age-friendly environments in their cities and communities. To provide knowledge and insights to these professionals, the AFC Toolkit professional VET profile will be created.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR INCLUSIVE AGE-FRIENDLY CITIES:

According to the WHO, age-friendly cities are committed to listening to the needs of their ageing population, assessing and monitoring their age-friendliness, and working collaboratively with older people and across sectors to create physical and social environments.

In spite of the good results obtained in the European age-friendly cities, their evaluation reports on their latest action plans related to the eight indicators established by the WHO[1] indicate the need to improve their achievements by reinforcing the efforts on several cross-cutting issues:

1. Management of age-friendly cities. Cooperation and transversality.
2. Ageism and human rights. Fight against age prejudices: permanent learning, health services, minorities, image of the elderly, etc.

² <https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/who-network/>

³ <https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/application-form/>



3. Participation. Empower people after retirement through personal opportunities, volunteer, employment.
4. Solidarity and intergenerational cooperation: loneliness, housing, volunteering,
5. Integrated health and social care model. Dementia-friendly cities experiences.
6. Technological and social innovation according to the opportunities of the demographic transition

NEEDS ANALYSIS IN EUROPE AND PARTICIPANT COUNTRIES

| Cross-related issues | WHO | EU | ES | NL | DK | IT |
|---|-----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1. Management of age-friendly cities. | XX | | XX | XX | XX | XX |
| 2. Ageism and human rights. | XX | XX | XX | XX | XX | XX |
| 3. Employment. | XX | XX | XX | XX | XX | XX |
| 4. Solidarity and intergenerational cooperation. | XX | XX | XX | XX | XX | XX |
| 5. Integrated health and social care model. | XX | XX | XX | XX | XX | XX |
| 6. Technological and social innovation | XX | XX | XX | XX | XX | XX |

The AGE-FRIENDLY TOOLKIT project is being developed in Denmark, The Netherlands, Italy, Spain and other European countries represented by AGE-Platform Europe. We consider different situations related to the implementation of the model of Age-friendly cities. Meanwhile in the northern countries the social indicators show a high rate of achievements, and the countries of the south show good results on indicators related to the infrastructures.



AGE-FRIENDLY CITIES NEEDS ACCORDING TO STRATEGIC ACTION PLANS

| OMS - UN | EU- Green paper | MADRID - ES | THE HAGUE -NL | AARHUS -DK | CARPI - IT |
|--|---|--|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizing the wide range of capacities and resources among older people; • Anticipating and responding flexibly to ageing-related needs and preferences; • Respecting older people's decisions and lifestyle choices; • Protecting those who are most vulnerable; and • Promoting older people's inclusion in, and contribution to, all areas of community life. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rights, autonomy and independence • Solidarity between generations • Employment • Life-long learning • Poverty, adequate income, and pensions • Long-term care • Social isolation and loneliness • Healthy Ageing • Age-friendly environments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - accessibility, - digitalisation, - mobility, - housing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Line 1: rethinking the governance model in an ageing city • Line 2: promoting the autonomy and independence of ageing citizens by creating healthy and friendly environments • Line 3: advancing in the guarantee of social collaboration and participation of ageing citizens as agents of change and protagonists in the construction of a welfare society | <p>The Action Plan of municipal policy is based on three priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve vitality • Reduce loneliness • Encourage and facilitate continuous living in your own environment (instead of care facilities) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior policy • Health policy • Policy for caregivers and family • Dementia Strategy • Strategy for civic Engagement and citizenship | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inter-or intra-generational training • training paths to support active ageing • participation in community life. • cultural events • civil commitment of senior citizens • Social tourism "tourism solidarity" • promotion of healthy lifestyles • Home support and the permanency of senior citizens in family contexts • Promotion of intergenerational co-habitation between senior citizens • Involvement of over sixty-fives in community social life • Support for spreading information and opportunities through ICT |

Source. table developed in the context of the AGE-Friendly toolkit project.

[1] (housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, citizen participation and employment and community support and health services)



OCCUPATIONAL PROFILE DESCRIPTION

The "Professional of Reference for the Development of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities" represents a strategic, cross-functional role dedicated to advancing age-friendly initiatives across municipalities.

This role involves guiding collaborative efforts between various municipal departments, social organisations, and private sector entities to foster inclusive and accessible urban environments for older adults.

The professional functions as a central coordinator and advocate, identifying opportunities to connect disparate programs and resources into cohesive, impactful initiatives that promote an age-friendly agenda.

Key aspects of this role include:

- **Cross-Departmental Coordination:** Acting as a liaison among departments such as urban planning, public health, social services, and transportation, this professional aligns the objectives of each department with age-friendly community goals, ensuring a comprehensive approach to inclusivity⁴.
- **Public-Private Collaboration:** Building relationships with citizens, social organisations, nonprofits, and businesses, the professional encourages investment and support for programs that enhance accessibility, engagement, and quality of life for older adults.
- **Strategic Planning and Implementation:** This role involves developing and implementing age-friendly policies and programs that address the evolving needs of ageing populations. The professional assesses community assets, identifies areas for improvement, and oversees the execution of initiatives aimed at making cities more inclusive for all ages.
- **Advocacy and Policy Development:** By advocating for age-friendly policies, this professional raises awareness about the importance of inclusive urban development. They work to secure buy-in from stakeholders and influence policies that promote accessibility, social participation, and the well-being of older residents.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** The professional is responsible for setting measurable goals, tracking progress, and assessing the effectiveness of age-friendly initiatives. This ensures that actions are data-driven and that adjustments can be made to improve outcomes continually.

GENERAL COMPETENCE

An age-friendly community professional plays a vital role in fostering inclusivity and accessibility across urban environments to better support ageing populations. This professional actively bridges gaps between municipal departments, social organisations, and businesses, cultivating partnerships that prioritise the needs of older adults. By coordinating collaborative efforts, they ensure that initiatives are not only inclusive but also sustainable, facilitating age-friendly infrastructure, social engagement opportunities, and policies that promote healthy ageing and independence.

⁴ Age-friendly Ireland. Reference to local structures: <https://agefriendlyireland.ie/about-us/our-structures/local-structures/>



Their approach is inherently interdisciplinary, drawing from urban planning, public health, social work, and community development. This professional also assesses and aligns local policies, services, and amenities with the WHO's age-friendly framework, advocating for enhancements in areas like public transportation, housing, social participation, and community health services. Through these efforts, age-friendly community professionals play a key role in transforming cities and towns into places where people of all ages can thrive.

The professional in age-friendly communities is a person capable of promoting synergies among different municipalities departments, together with social organisations and companies, creating transversal actions for the development of inclusive age-friendly cities and communities.

SPECIFIC COMPETENCIES

To describe the new professional profile, the AGE-FRIENDLY TOOLKIT project proposed a set of competencies:

- To provide knowledge on built and smart environments
- To promote social participation
- To eliminate barriers to social inclusion and cooperation
- To raise awareness of the importance of civic engagement and employment
- To facilitate community support and communication in age-friendly communities
- Capacity building
- To understand interdependent and cross-cutting issues.

C1 TO PROVIDE KNOWLEDGE ON BUILT AND SMART ENVIRONMENTS

Built environments are the physical living environments of older adults. They include housing, outdoor spaces and buildings and transportation. According to the World Health Organization, living environments have a major impact on the mobility, independence and quality of life of older people and affect their ability to “age in place”. Considering the ongoing digitisation of society and the potential support of digital solutions in the physical environment, the theme will also focus on smart digital environments. A supportive built and digital environment should be safe, accessible, and inclusive for people of all ages and abilities. The specific competencies considered are as follows:

HOUSING

A1. Identify the physical and digital environment in the context of social participation, inclusion, and well-being of older adults.

A2. Support strategic partnerships of local, regional and national stakeholders, such as public authorities, housing companies, architects, urban planners, shops and transportation providers, to encourage the focus on user-centred design, accessibility and affordability of physical and digital environments.

A3. Participate in an action plan aimed at creating accessible and affordable built and smart environments at the local level, considering the different needs and demands of older adults.



A4. Implement and manage an age-friendly project to develop age-friendly physical and smart environments.

OUTDOOR PLACES AND BUILDINGS

B1. Raise awareness of the contributions of older adults to society on social inclusion, and economic growth through housing, outdoor spaces and buildings and transportation.

B2. To promote user-friendly design, facilitate older peoples' participation in projects, and encourage them to engage in co-creation activities together with local authorities, social organisations, and other stakeholders.

B3. Promote the health and well-being of older adults by facilitating their access to affordable and accessible housing, outdoor spaces and transportation, empathising and listening to the interests and needs of each person according to their individual preferences, priorities, lifestyle, social habits, practices and traditions.

TRANSPORTATION

C1. Promote age-friendly initiatives and activities by addressing the question, *“why do we need to engage older people in decision-making in an ageing society?”*.

C2. Support the development of campaigns concerning new models of participation, decision-making and governance within the framework of cooperation and co-production among individuals, social organisations and local authorities in age-friendly cities - AFC.

C3. Activate a range of factors, such as motivation, gender approach, accessibility, teamwork, etc. that facilitate the participation of older adults in decision-making and civic engagement at the local level.

D1. Monitor and evaluate a built and smart environments strategy in line with the principles of engagement and understanding, strategic planning, evaluation and action, and implementation, as outlined in the WHO report “AFE in Europe: creation of Age-Friendly environments” and AFE-INNOVNET Social Economic and Environmental Impact Tool (SEE-IT)⁵.

C2. TO PROVIDE KNOWLEDGE TO PROMOTE SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Fostering persons' social participation along their whole life course represents a widely shared policy objective. It is a key component of people's enjoyment of their rights as citizens. It also has implications for society as a whole from an economic, social, and environmental point of view.

Demographic and socio-economic shifts call for policymakers and all relevant stakeholders to review participation patterns in terms of evolving family and societal structures. Age-friendly communities have a number of distinct roles to play in facilitating

⁵ Age-friendly environments in Europe: indicators, monitoring and assessments
[https://www.who.int/europe/initiatives/age-friendly-environments-in-europe-\(afee\)](https://www.who.int/europe/initiatives/age-friendly-environments-in-europe-(afee))
AFE-INNOVNET Towards an age-friendly Europe, funded by the EU ICT Policy Support Programme (ICT PSP), GA 620978,
<https://cordis.europa.eu/docs/projects/cnect/8/620978/080/deliverables/002-AFEINNOVNETD42FINAL.pdf>.



social participation, as well as supporting older persons themselves, policymakers, practitioners, and society as a whole.

The specific competencies considered are as follows:

SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS FOR SOCIAL EXCHANGE IN THE COMMUNITIES

- A1. To create attractive local meeting places for the social participation of older persons;
- A2 To offer older persons with buildings, infrastructures and facilities for social interaction activities.
- A3. To promote the online social participation of older persons through online platforms, Apps, and others.
- A4. To detect and prevent loneliness in the local community through the built environment and online tools.
- B1. To design, implement, and assess sociocultural/ leisure-time/ physical/ lifelong learning/ intergenerational activities and programmes promoting social participation of older persons

OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER PERSONS' SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

- B2. To design, organise, and assess capacity-building activities for policymakers and practitioners promoting and/or facilitating older persons' social participation
- B3. To provide social counselling
- B4. To coach and motivate both individuals and groups of persons

LIFELONG LEARNING

- C1 To adopt a person-centred approach to social participation
- C2. To adopt a human-rights-based approach to social participation
- C3. To practice community development, thus supporting and facilitating inclusive and collective working
- C4. To design, plan, implement, and assess lifelong learning activities for older persons. adopt a person-centred approach to social participation
- C5. To adopt a human-rights-based approach to social participation
- C6. practice community development, thus supporting and facilitating inclusive and collective working
- C7. to design, plan, implement, and assess lifelong learning activities for older persons.

MULTILEVEL AND/OR MULTISECTORAL INTERVENTIONS

- D1. To build strategic partnerships;
- D2. To facilitate participatory processes;
- D3. To facilitate, promote, and manage multilevel and multistakeholder interventions.

C3. TO PROVIDE KNOWLEDGE TO ELIMINATE BARRIERS TO SOCIAL INCLUSION AND COOPERATION

The topic of social inclusion and cooperation of older people is of immense importance today. As our global population ages, it becomes crucial to recognise and address the needs and contributions of older individuals. This demographic shift presents unique challenges and opportunities that require a collective effort to ensure a harmonious and inclusive society for all.

First and foremost, promoting social inclusion among older people is essential for fostering a sense of belonging and dignity. As individuals age, they may face various physical,



emotional, and social changes that can lead to feelings of isolation and exclusion. By actively engaging older individuals in their communities, we can combat loneliness, enhance their quality of life, and promote overall well-being.

The specific competencies considered are as follows:

COMBATING AGEISM

A1. To Understand ageism, put yourself in an older person's shoes.

A2. To Understand the difficulties older people face.

A3. To identify the forms of ageism.

A4. To recognise forms of abuse towards older people.

A5. To promote more positive images of older people and ageing.

A6. To Monitor and evaluate as outlined in the WHO report titled "AFE in Europe: the creation of Age-Friendly Environments"

PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION OF OLDER PEOPLE

B1 To describe the different forms of social exclusion in later life.

B2 To promote more positive images of older people and ageing.

B3 To promote principles of equity.

B4 Take into account and work with the older people since step one (person-centred approach).

B5 Understanding the difficulties older people face.

B6. Monitor and evaluate as outlined in the report titled "AFE in Europe: creation of Age-Friendly environments"

C4. TO PROVIDE KNOWLEDGE TO RAISE AWARENESS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND EMPLOYMENT

Staying actively engaged as a personal choice beyond economic necessity has been shown to have several benefits for physical and mental health and well-being and is critical for the future sustainability of social trends in ageing societies (WHO⁶).

In this context, authorities, decision-makers, social organisations, individuals, and other actors at local level must be aware of the potential of longevity and demographic transition and work together to co-create more and better opportunities to engage older people in political, economic, productive, and public life if they wish to do so.

The specific competencies considered are as follows:

EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC LIFE OF OLDER ADULTS:

⁶ WHO (2017): Age-friendly environments in Europe. A handbook of domains for policy action. <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/334251/9789289052887-eng.pdf>



A1. Identify the situation of the ageing workforce in the context of a flexible life-course approach, advocating for age-friendly environments and the inclusion of older workers in the labour market.

A2. Support strategic partnerships, considering entrepreneur associations, trade unions, and other organisations, to promote the value of senior talent and intergenerational cooperation in the labour market, addressing ageism and stereotypical views of older adults that are still prevalent in the workplace.

A3. Participate in an action plan aimed at creating accessible, age-friendly workplaces at the local level, considering the different capacities of an ageing workforce.

A4. Implement and manage an age-friendly project for those who wish to work longer after retirement concerning entrepreneurship and silver economy opportunities.

UNPAID WORK AND VOLUNTEERING OF OLDER PEOPLE

B1. Raise awareness on the contributions of older adults to society in terms of social inclusion and economic growth through unpaid work (family care) and volunteering in age-friendly cities and communities.

B2. To promote productive ageing, older peoples' participation in volunteering projects should be facilitated, and they should be encouraged to engage in co-creation activities together with local authorities, social organisations, and other stakeholders.

B3. Promote the health and well-being of older adults by facilitating their access to volunteering and unpaid activities, empathising with and listening to the interests and needs of each person according to their individual preferences, priorities, lifestyle, social habits, practices, and traditions.

OLDER ADULTS' CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

C1. Promote age-friendly initiatives and activities by addressing the question "*why do we need to engage older people in decision-making in an ageing society?*".

C2. Support the development of campaigns concerning new models of participation, decision-making and governance within the framework of cooperation and co-production among individuals, social organisations and local authorities in AFC.

C3. Activate a range of factors, such as motivation, gender approach, accessibility, teamwork, etc. that facilitate the participation of older adults in decision-making and civic engagement at the local level.

C4. Monitor and evaluate a civic engagement and employment strategy in line with the principles of engagement and understanding, strategic planning, evaluation and action, and implementation, as outlined in the WHO report "AFE in Europe: creation of Age-Friendly environments"⁷.

⁷ Age-friendly environments in Europe: indicators, monitoring and assessments [https://www.who.int/europe/initiatives/age-friendly-environments-in-europe-\(afee\)](https://www.who.int/europe/initiatives/age-friendly-environments-in-europe-(afee))



C5. TO PROVIDE KNOWLEDGE TO FACILITATE COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND COMMUNICATION IN AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

Activities to improve communication and information aimed at all groups of older people play a key role in closing the gaps in access to services, activities and events, and in reaching out to more vulnerable parts of the population.

Community activities for healthy ageing are often attended by groups of relatively healthy older people – they tend to be part of social and family networks that help them to stay connected with community life and informed about the range of activities and services available to them, including their rights and how to access public services. Opportunities to access information are therefore not equally spread among older people.

Community support and health care, in the context of a age-friendly cities, can be defined as the provision of essential services, resources, and social support systems designed to promote the well-being and quality of life of older adults within a community. The specific competencies considered are as follows:

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

- A1. Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the challenges, needs, and experiences of older adults in relation to communication and information within an Age-friendly city context.
- A2. Apply effective communication strategies and techniques when engaging with older adults, their families, caregivers, and other stakeholders, considering their diverse backgrounds and communication preferences.
- A3. Adapt communication approaches to meet the specific needs of individuals with dementia or brain damage, using simplified language, visual aids, and non-verbal techniques to enhance understanding and engagement.
- A4. Foster intergenerational interactions by promoting mutual learning, understanding, and empathy between people of different age groups.
- A5. Utilise various communication channels and technologies, including interpersonal, public, and digital communication methods, to disseminate relevant and accessible information to older adults and their communities.
- A6. Collaborate and coordinate efforts with community organisations, local authorities, healthcare professionals, and advocacy groups to enhance communication and information provision in Age-friendly cities.
- A7. Actively listen to and understand the concerns, preferences, and feedback of older adults, their families, and other stakeholders, and respond appropriately to their needs.
- A8. Advocate for the rights and needs of older adults, particularly those with dementia or brain damage, and promote age-friendly communication and information practices within the city.



A9. Continuously update knowledge and skills through ongoing learning, research, and professional development opportunities in the field of communication and information for age-friendly cities.

A10. Demonstrate empathy, respect, and patience towards older adults, recognising their individuality and unique experiences, and contribute to creating inclusive and empowering communication environments that support their well-being and active participation

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND HEALTHCARE

B1. Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the physical, cognitive, and social changes associated with ageing, with a specific focus on dementia and other brain disorders.

B2. Apply evidence-based knowledge and best practices in dementia care, including diagnosis, treatment, and management strategies, to support individuals with dementia and their caregivers.

B3. Utilise knowledge of available community support services, programs, and resources, such as memory clinics, support groups, respite care, and specialised healthcare services, to enhance the well-being and quality of life of older adults with dementia.

B4. Implement dementia-friendly design principles to create inclusive and accessible environments that promote independence, safety, and well-being for individuals with dementia.

B5. Demonstrate effective communication and interpersonal skills when interacting with individuals with dementia, their families, caregivers, and other stakeholders, showing empathy, active listening, and sensitivity.

B6. Develop and implement individualised care plans for individuals with dementia, considering their unique needs, preferences, and goals and coordinating comprehensive support services accordingly.

B7. Collaborate effectively with multidisciplinary teams, including healthcare professionals, social workers, and community organisations, to provide comprehensive and coordinated care and support for individuals with dementia and their families.

B8. Apply problem-solving and critical thinking skills to assess complex situations, identify challenges, and develop creative solutions to address the specific needs and challenges faced by individuals with dementia in the community.

B9. Demonstrate a person-centred care approach, focusing on the individual strengths, preferences, and goals of individuals with dementia and involving them in decision-making processes.

B10. Embrace a lifelong learning mindset, staying updated with the latest research, best practices, and advancements in dementia care and community support, and continuously seeking opportunities for professional development.

Show cultural sensitivity and respect for the diverse cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and values of individuals with dementia and their families, providing culturally sensitive care and support.



C6. CAPACITY BUILDING

The development and implementation of an age-friendly cities and communities - AFCC programme often require that staff and practitioners change their work habits, develop new or refined processes and view government business and activities differently:

- **A good negotiator can assess the core requirements** for all sides and determine which elements can be negotiated, prioritise the requirements of each side, and enter discussions, knowing how to manage conversations and reach agreements on mutually agreed priorities.
- **An excellent listener spends more time listening to work colleagues**, partners or potential partners than speaking, as they know that understanding the partner's position is critical.
- **A good facilitator can help colleagues and partners** express their views and positions, identify consensus or disagreement, and help find solutions.
- **A good innovator values innovation and is prepared to try new approaches** and take risks by questioning the status quo, observing, experimenting and networking.
- **A good “intrapreneur” (inside entrepreneur) exercises initiative** and pursues opportunities, strategically assesses the political environment and sees how best to take advantage of opportunities as they arise, with an entrepreneurial spirit.
- **An excellent communicator** with strong verbal, written, and non-written communication skills.
- **A person who is good at building and maintaining relationships** demonstrates the importance of doing so with the team and other sectors.
- **A “systems thinker” demonstrates a holistic** approach to the analysis of a system's constituent parts, interrelations and how systems work over time and within larger systems.
- **A respectful person values diversity and recognises** the importance of drawing on a wide range of skills.
- **Someone who can compromise recognises** that there is no point in being rigid in a collaboration.
- **A person with strong political acumen is conscious** of the politics within and between agencies and the political environment of the government.

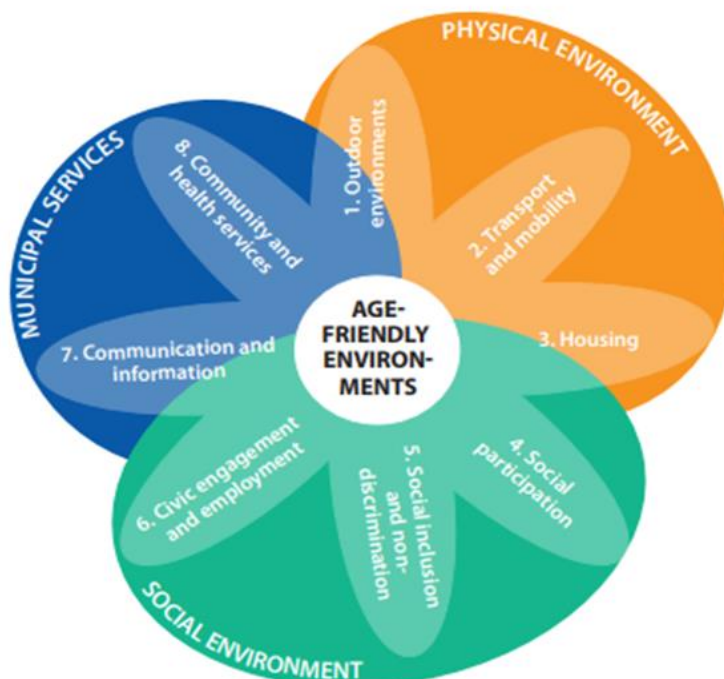
PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT

According to the AGE-FRIENDLY TOOLKIT project development, the professional dedicated to age-friendly communities requires a blend of technical, social, and strategic skills to foster inclusive environments and promote collaboration across multiple sectors.

In this regard, the AGE-FRIENDLY TOOLKIT project considers that 'Community development is a process that entails organisation, facilitation, and action, which allows people to establish ways to create the community they want to live in. It is a process that provides vision, planning, direction, and coordinated action towards desired goals associated with the promotion of efforts aimed at improving the conditions in which local resources operate. As a result, community developers harness local economic, human,



and physical resources to secure daily requirements and respond to changing needs and conditions.⁸”



From the qualitative research developed in the AGE-FRIENDLY TOOLKIT project with a wide variety of stakeholders, we have found that the professional who wants to promote and develop age-friendly environments needs to possess knowledge, skills and attitudes on three levels.

First, the professional needs to know how to develop communities and work with diverse groups of people and stakeholders. For this the professional needs to:

- Be able to raise awareness of the local community's priorities;
- Be able to promote age-friendly environments through networking and being able to work with various stakeholders;
- Be able to mobilise the necessary resources to implement age-friendly environments.

Second, the professional needs to be able to work embracing a **person-centred approach**, which means that the AFC professional can focus on care and can support the needs of the individual, ensuring that people's preferences, needs and values guide decisions and providing respectful and responsive care and support. For this, the professional needs to:

- Be able to listen actively and with empathy;
- Be able to analyse the needs of older adults across the life-span;

⁸ Matarrita-Cascante, D., & Brennan, M. A. (2012). Conceptualizing community development in the twenty-first century. *Community Development*, 43(3), 293-305. doi:10.1080/15575330.2011.593267

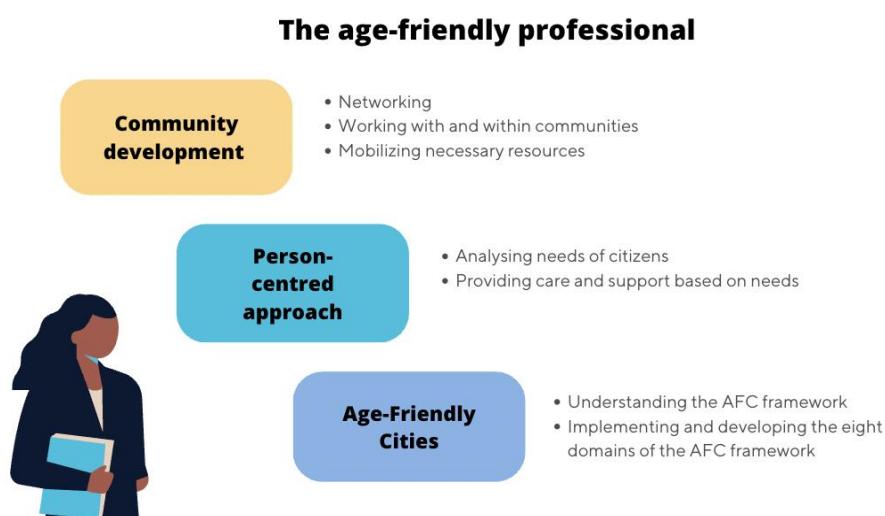


- Be able to provide care and support based on the needs of older adults.

Third, the AFC professional needs to understand the Age-Friendly Cities framework and obtain skills, knowledge and attitudes specific to implementing and developing the eight domains of this framework. For this, the professional needs to:

- Understand and know the eight domains of the Age-Friendly Cities framework
- Be able to design and implement actions to develop and promote the eight domains of the Age-Friendly Cities framework.

The figure below gives an overview of the three levels the AFC professional will need to obtain knowledge, skills and attitudes. A more elaborated analysis and more specific skills, knowledge and attitudes can be found in the international report.



In this context, the AFE-FRIENDLY TOOLKIT considers the following work-related areas linked to the next opportunities and challenges for the development of the new professional profile:

1. Interdepartmental and Cross-Sectoral Collaboration

- **Building Partnerships:** Ability to engage various stakeholders, including municipal departments, healthcare organisations, non-profits, and private sector partners. This involves cultivating relationships that encourage these entities to collaborate on age-friendly projects.
- **Facilitating Communication Across Sectors:** Skills in creating efficient communication channels that bridge gaps between departments (e.g., transportation, urban planning, social services) and between organisations. This includes organising regular cross-functional meetings and fostering a shared sense of purpose among participants.
- **Conflict Resolution and Mediation:** Proficiency in managing conflicting priorities or viewpoints that may arise among departments or organisations and finding common ground to move projects forward.

2. Knowledge of Built and Smart Environments



- **Urban Design Principles:** Expertise in age-friendly urban design, including knowledge of accessible infrastructure (ramps, wider sidewalks, proper lighting, safe crossings, etc.), public spaces, and green areas that support mobility and socialisation for older adults.
- **Smart City Technologies:** Understanding of digital tools and smart technologies (like assistive devices, IoT solutions, and wayfinding apps) that enhance accessibility and safety. This includes promoting digital literacy and access to technology for seniors.
- **Safety and Security Protocols:** Awareness of security considerations such as emergency response plans, easily accessible information points, and community safety networks to make environments safer for seniors.

3. Community Building and Engagement

- **Community Empowerment Techniques:** Skills in empowering older adults to take an active role in their communities, whether through volunteer opportunities, mentorship programs, or civic participation.
- **Event Planning and Facilitation:** Ability to organise community events, workshops, and social gatherings that foster intergenerational connection, reduce isolation, and build stronger community bonds.
- **Outreach Strategies:** Experience in implementing outreach programs that specifically target older adults, including marginalised or underserved groups, to promote inclusivity and participation.

4. Promotion of Social Participation and Inclusion

- **Inclusive Program Design:** Ability to design inclusive community programs that account for the diverse needs and abilities of older adults. This includes recreational, educational, and cultural activities that encourage active participation.
- **Reducing Stigma and Promoting Respect:** Skills in campaigns or educational initiatives that aim to reduce age-related stigma and promote a culture of respect for older adults.
- **Intergenerational Programming:** Proficiency in creating programs that connect younger and older generations, which strengthens social cohesion and provides mutual learning opportunities.

5. Awareness-Raising and Advocacy

- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Skills in developing and executing campaigns that raise awareness about age-friendly issues and encourage broader community involvement and support.
- **Stakeholder Engagement and Lobbying:** Ability to engage local government officials, business leaders, and community influencers to advocate for policies and resources that support age-friendly initiatives.



- **Communication and Persuasion Skills:** Strong public speaking and communication skills to present age-friendly proposals to councils, boards, and the public, emphasising the benefits for the whole community.

6. Barrier Identification and Removal

- **Conducting Needs Assessments and Surveys:** Ability to assess the community's current environment through surveys, focus groups, and needs assessments, identifying physical and social barriers that impact older adults.
- **Data Analysis and Solution Design:** Proficiency in analysing collected data to inform evidence-based strategies for removing barriers and creating more accessible, inclusive spaces.
- **Accessibility Standards Knowledge:** Familiarity with local and international accessibility standards (such as ADA compliance or WHO age-friendly guidelines) to ensure barrier-free built environments.

7. Facilitation of Community Support and Communication

- **Network Building:** Skills in developing networks of support within the community, including peer support groups, volunteer networks, and partnerships with local service providers.
- **Information Dissemination:** Expertise in communicating resources, services, and event information to older adults through accessible channels such as local media, online platforms, and community bulletin boards.
- **Digital Literacy Promotion:** Ability to foster digital skills among older adults so they can access community information online, connect with others, and benefit from digital support services.

8. Interpersonal and Empathy Skills

- **Empathy and Listening Skills:** Sensitivity to the unique perspectives and challenges of older adults, including an empathetic approach to understanding their needs and preferences.
- **Cultural Competence:** Ability to work respectfully and effectively with seniors from diverse backgrounds, ensuring inclusivity and equitable treatment in all initiatives.
- **Conflict Management:** Skills in navigating sensitive topics and potential conflicts respectfully, ensuring that differing views among seniors, families, and other stakeholders are acknowledged and addressed.
- **Capacity-Building for Staff and Volunteers:** Skills in training municipal employees, volunteers, and organisation staff on age-friendly practices, accessibility considerations, and communication with older adults.
- **Community Workshops:** Ability to design and facilitate educational workshops or training sessions for older adults on topics like digital literacy, personal safety, or new community programs.



- **Development of Educational Materials:** Experience in creating accessible and engaging educational resources, like guides, pamphlets, and presentations, tailored to the needs and abilities of older adults.

This professional's skill set allows them to advocate, coordinate, and innovate effectively in the pursuit of age-friendly communities that meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of older adults.

OCCUPATIONAL DESCRIPTION– ESCO CLASSIFICATION.

In order to provide an occupational framework of reference for the new professional profile, AGE-FRIENDLY TOOLKIT partners agree to use the European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations classification (ESCO). ESCO contains accurate descriptions of occupations and skills that can be used in both drafting job offers and CVs, facilitating comparability and matching.

In this regard, following ESCO methodology we can allocate the professional profile in the ESCO GROUP number 3 Technicians and associate professions which is described as “Technicians and associate professionals perform technical and related tasks connected with research and the application of scientific or artistic concepts and operational methods, and government or business regulations”⁹ In the group, 34 Legal, Social, Cultural and Related Associate Professionals, described as: “Legal, social, cultural and related associate professionals perform technical tasks connected with the practical application of knowledge relating to legal services, social work, culture, food preparation, sport and religion.”

Following the ESCO methodology, the project proposal proposes to consider the following description.

| Occupation | Description |
|--|---|
| Professional of reference for AGE-Friendly cities and communities | <p>A Professional of Reference for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities is a practice-based specialist who promotes social change, development, social cohesion, and intergenerational cooperation. They aim to improve the image of older adults, eliminate ageist views in cities and communities, and empower older people in urban and community settings.</p> <p>Professionals in this field assist public and private organizations with interdepartmental and cross-sectoral collaboration toward building a society for all ages. They provide expertise on built and smart environments, foster community building and engagement, promote social participation and inclusion, raise awareness and advocate for change, identify and remove barriers to accessibility, facilitate community support and communication, and cultivate interpersonal and empathy skills in an ageing society.</p> |

⁹ ESCO. GROUP

3https://esco.ec.europa.eu/en/classification/occupation_main#overlayspin



ESSENTIAL SKILLS

Skills are defined as the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems (CEDEFOP). According to the ESCO references, we can set the following range of essential skills and competencies as a reference for the “Professional of reference in inclusive age-friendly cities and communities”.

Essential Skills

- Advocate for the human rights of older people
- Apply person-centred care
- Apply problem-solving for improving interdepartmental and cross-sectoral collaboration in age-friendly cities and communities
- Apply quality standards in the management of age-friendly cities and communities
- Assess the situation of older people in the 8 domains established by WHO
- Establish supportive relationships with older adults who are users of social services
- Brief volunteers
- Communicate professionally with colleagues in other fields
- Communicate with social service users
- Contribute to protecting individuals from harm
- Demonstrate leadership
- Deliver social services in diverse cultural communities
- Facilitate teamwork
- Facilitate the transition to retirement
- Follow health and safety precautions in social care practices
- Foster intergenerational cooperation
- Give constructive feedback
- Listen actively
- Maintain records of work with service users
- Manage ethical issues within social services
- Manage social crises to meet standards of practice in social services
- Mentor individuals
- Networking competencies
- Observe confidentiality
- Participating in the Age-Friendly City/community plan
- Plan social service processes to prevent social
- Problems promote service users' rights and protect vulnerable people
- Promote the accessibility of public buildings and outdoor spaces for older people
- Promote accessible transportation and mobility options for older people
- Promote accessible housing for older people with low incomes
- Relate empathetically
- Reduce ageists views
- Recognise dementia symptoms
- Show intercultural awareness
- Provide support to social services users who relate empathetically
- Promote volunteering
- Promote the participation of older people in focus groups
- Promote intergenerational workforce



- Promote community support
- Promote civic engagement
- Recognise situation of loneliness and isolation of older people
- Inform about the social service plan
- Use communication techniques
- Work in a multicultural environment

Optional Skills

- Apply a holistic approach to services in age-friendly cities and communities
- Capacity building
- Communication
- Comply with legislation related to age-friendly environments
- Data protection
- Interview in social service
- Develop professional identity in social work
- Empower individuals, families and groups
- Empower social service users
- Give constructive feedback
- Identify mental health issues
- Plan a schedule to promote inclusion
- Train employees
- Validation of learning acquired through volunteering
- Use foreign languages

Optional Knowledge

- Older people psychological development
- Client-centred counselling
- Communication community
- Education consultation
- Counselling methods
- Crisis intervention
- Developmental psychology
- Health care system
- Legal requirements in the social sector
- Social sciences social work theory

MENTOR AFE. WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION

The WHO, in its project MENTOR AFE, proposes building leaders for the next decade in age-friendly cities and communities. In this regard, WHO asks the following question: Do you want to be more skilled at transforming your city or community to be a better place for people of all ages?

The Age-friendly Environments Mentorship Programme, MENTOR-AFE, provides opportunities for emerging and established leaders of age-friendly communities further to develop their skills with the support of a mentor and existing experts to share their knowledge and experience and to develop mentees' skills to lead, influence and implement age-friendly environments, and in doing so, reinforcing their own leadership and expertise.



MENTOR-AFE aims to build skills that are important for developing age-friendly environments, including:

- advocating for older people and age-friendly environments;
- building strategic partnerships;
- facilitating participatory processes;
- understanding and addressing inequalities;
- conducting a baseline assessment;
- developing an action plan and evidence-based programme design;
- managing and coordinating teams;
- implementing and managing an age-friendly project or programme of work;
- analysing and developing policies;
- monitoring and evaluation;
- imparting knowledge and skills to others;
- fundraising;
- designing and implementing campaigns and
- communicating and promoting project activities.

GLOSSARY

Competence. Ability to apply learning outcomes adequately in a defined context (education, work, personal or professional development). Ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities in work or study situations and in professional and personal development. Comment: competence is not limited to cognitive elements (involving the use of theory, concepts or tacit knowledge); it also encompasses functional aspects (including technical skills) as well as interpersonal attributes (e.g. social or organisational skills) and ethical values.

Lifelong learning. All learning activities undertaken throughout life aim to improve knowledge, skills/competencies, and/or qualifications for personal, social, and/or professional reasons.

Learning outcome / learning attainments. Set of knowledge, skills and/or competencies an individual has acquired and/or is able to demonstrate after completion of a learning process, either formal, non-formal or Statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of the learning process, which is defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.

Occupation refers to the kind of work performed in a job. The concept of *occupation* is defined as a “set of jobs whose main tasks and duties are characterised by a high degree of similarity”. A person may be associated with an occupation through the main job currently held, a second job, a future job or a job previously held.

Qualification. An official record (certificate, diploma) of achievement recognises successful completion of education or training, satisfactory performance in a test or examination, and/or the requirements for an individual to enter, or progress within an occupation.

Skill. Ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems.



Skill needs. Demand for particular types of knowledge and skills in the labour market (total demand within a country or region, economic sector, etc.).

Comments: skills needs analysis (also referred to as identification of skills needs) aims at identifying skills gaps and shortages, anticipating skills needs, and assessing the capacity of qualification systems (education and training provision, funding schemes, etc.) to meet the needs of the economy;

- anticipation of skills needs is the process of identifying skills the economy will require in the short, medium or longer term;
- skills forecasting estimates the skill demand (jobs) and/or skill supply (labour force) that will be available in the short, medium or long term.



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