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## Active I - Newsletter

### Healthy Active Living for Seniors

#### **Train the seniors with Active I training programme**

We are now half way through the Active\_I project and are happy to confirm that we have now completed a successful Train the Trainer course at the beginning of 2015 in Muenster and even more successful training courses for seniors in each partner country. Below is some feedback from the trainings:

#### **Train the Trainers in Münster:**

The future Active\_I instructors from Ireland, Italy, Poland and Spain successfully completed the training for instructors in Muenster, Germany in January 2015. The training was organised by the team at the University of Muenster and was held in the DJK Sportzentrum. Experts in physical activity, nutrition, mental wellbeing and active aging provided theoretical training sessions to the participants. In practical sessions focused on physical activity, nutrition and mental wellbeing, the participants experienced for themselves the didactical

principles of the Active\_I concepts.



### **Active I – Italian Partners had started the Course!**

Italian Partner CO&SO Empoli started the Active\_I training course on the 3rd of March. The condensed course was completed on the 19th of March. This first training course was conducted by the Consortium CO&SO Empoli in collaboration with the AUSER Association, a national organisation dedicated to encouraging volunteering among the elderly to achieve well-being, good social relations, and help for other more disadvantaged elderly people.

The training was attended by 14 people, all women, aged between 59 and 83 years. All participants were very excited about this first part of the training. Many of them were already active and exercise 2 to 3 times a week but none had ever participated in a course that combines exercise, nutrition and mental well-being.

At the end of the first intensive week, the participants were evaluated through a questionnaire and it was found that they were highly satisfied with the course and had a strong desire to continue with it.

Our participants found all aspects of the course very useful. They learned the importance of applying the physical activity exercises in their everyday lives and realised the benefits of the breathing exercises and meditation to their mental wellbeing. They highly enjoyed the



games and social activities and the development of life skills sections of the course but found the changes to their eating habits more difficult, especially after years of eating a routine diet. They have, however, been open to understanding more about nutrition and aging.

We are now entering the sixth week of follow-up training and were delighted to introduce them to exercise through dance, which they have excelled at. It is a real joy as trainers and partners in Active\_I to see them dance and enjoy exercising so much. The follow-up training will end on the 5th of June and we will celebrate the final day with the participants and their families. For now though, we are enjoying every day of what is left of the training. Every day we smile and every day we learn something new from one another!



### Spanish train the seniors

Our training course took place from the 7th to the 21st of April in the Municipality of Villaquilambre (León, Spain) and involved 21 participants.

The seniors have rated their experience of the course very positively and we are happy to report that the City Hall Mayor has recognised the value of the Active\_I course and has officially declared his intention to continue to involve himself with the project and its valorisation.

In addition to the three main components of this course (nutrition, mental wellbeing, and physical activity), our participants have emphasised the positive impact of the new social fabric that has developed in the group. This 'Power of the Group' is also a significant contributing factor to a healthy, happy lifestyle and it will be encouraged in the next group of

seniors who have registered for the second 10 week course starting on the 19th of May. This course will accommodate 25 new participants in response to the growing demand for healthy, active aging education in Villaquilambre.



### Polish training with seniors

There are 15 participants in the course in Poland, aged from 58 to 81, with a diverse range of physical capability and awareness of healthy habits. They have all reported that they appreciated the opportunity to build new social relationships and have enjoyed the positive atmosphere among the group. The response to the three main pillars of the course has been very good overall. Most of the participants are very satisfied with the physical activity segment although the trainers did have to implement adaptations for some participants, particularly the older ones, who struggled with the more demanding exercises. The younger and fitter participants gravitated towards dynamic exercises whereas the older participants enjoyed exercise at a moderate or slow pace. In general, they all seemed most interested in exercises that engaged a lot of muscles, especially abdominal muscles. They particularly enjoyed jogging and exercising in the park although, again, some of the participants chose a steady walk over a jog. The memory training section of the course was also popular among the group.

The Polish seniors very much enjoyed preparing meals together and sharing healthy recipes

and tips. Although there was some mistrust at first, now they see the benefit of the relaxation techniques that they have learned and many of them have realised just how susceptible to stress they used to be. Overall, they have expressed great satisfaction with the comprehensiveness and diversity of the activities offered.



### **Ireland train the seniors**

The first training course in Ireland began on the 30th of March with a group of 9 seniors. Our participants are aged between 58 and 70 years and have varying levels of health and fitness. Although many were already quite active, they still found certain sections of the physical activity component challenging especially in the fitness and balance tests. The nutrition aspect of the course was very well received and the participants all enjoyed learning about making healthy eating choices and cooking together as a group. With many of the participants reporting problems with stress and anxiety before the course began, the mental wellbeing module was a very apt and welcome component of the Active\_I course and the participants have experienced a real benefit from it.

More than anything, the sense of belonging to a group has been hugely important to the participants and they have already made plans to continue organising group activities among themselves when the course finishes on the 21st of May. The feedback given by the seniors has been overwhelmingly positive and genuinely heart-warming for the Irish project partners



and trainers who have found working with the seniors hugely rewarding. Participants have said that the course has been 'life changing' and has 'far exceeded [their] expectations'. One participant wrote that taking part in the course has been 'the best experience of [her] life' and emphasised the feeling of inclusiveness and equality within the group.

After such a successful debut, a second course has been organised and will start on the 25th of May. After such a positive response from the first course, Active\_I has become very popular among the older community in Galway and as a result the new course is now almost entirely booked out.



### **The 4th partner meeting in Leon, Spain**

From 20th to 21st of April 2015, the partners met in Leon, Spain. We talked about the software being developed for the seniors, "Plan50+", by the IT partner VCAT and about further developments concerning the courses.

The highlight of the meeting was being introduced to the group of seniors participating in Active\_I training in Spain. It was amazing to see how happy the seniors were with the project and how much they were enjoying taking part. They were so grateful for the opportunity to gain new insights into positive choices for a healthy mind and body and the experience really demonstrated to the partners the value of what they have been working towards to the public and the genuine need that there is for it within the older community in Europe.



## Safe the date

**As promised in our project application, a sporting event for seniors in Krakow has been set for the 2nd and 3rd of April, 2016. Please save the date. You will get further information on the website [plan50+.eu](http://plan50+.eu) and [active-i.eu](http://active-i.eu)**

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