

Trägerverein aktiv55plus Radevormwald e. V., Germany
Supporting association aktiv55plus Radevormwald e. V.

**Initial
Position**

On 31 December 2011, more than 35% of the citizens of Radevormwald were older than 55 years (source: regionalstatistik.de). This percentage is more than 2% higher than the average in Germany (source: ibid) and is still increasing. In 2002, the Johanniter Services Radevormwald developed the project *aktiv55plus* with the European bond *Active Ageing* of the WHO. The project was initially funded by the city of Radevormwald, the Johanniter Services (since 6/2012 Sana Krankenhaus Radevormwald gGmbH) and the WHO and got support through many municipal and regional organisations (e.g. district health office, adult education centre, medical association, cultural association of Radevormwald, local nursing services, health insurances, companies etc.).

The project was set up to support the active and independent lifestyle of elderly people in order to increase their quality of life.

In cooperation with the 350 WHO project participants, principles of a capability-orientated active ageing for the municipality were developed.

At the end of 2004, the supporting association aktiv55plus Radevormwald e.V. was founded reflecting the results of activating home visits, individual counselling and networking. The association was built on the infrastructure that was developed through the project. Interlinked civic involvement in the third stage of life has been seen as essential while founding aktiv55plus and was used to build a network between several different areas.

Furthermore, the care counselling, which is independent from any institution, was transferred from the city Radevormwald to aktiv55plus on 1st July 2005. Besides that, the association also took over the sector "planning work with the elderly" from the city.

Objectives

As the objective of this project, active ageing initiates a process, which is targeted to improve and explore the possibilities of participation, the use of knowledge and competence, the encouragement and maintenance of health and security for and by senior citizens. It includes the continuous involvement of elderly people in social, economic, cultural, intellectual and public processes. Thereby physical activities are representing one part of active ageing.

Methods Concepts

Main methods are the so-called active contact seeking or rather activating home visits, individual counselling as well as building a network between civic and municipal level and providers of different services.

Those low-threshold methods are encouraging the capabilities of elderly people. It involves the reduction of social isolation using methods such as connecting people for cultural, sportive or social leisure activities. At the same time, the desire to share one's own expertise and knowledge with others can be realized through volunteer work. All networking is based on the requests and ideas of the citizens whilst recognising the already existing manifold local offers.

In the context of care counselling, interfaces are identified and help can be provided to prevent short-term commitments to residential homes for the elderly. The cooperation with the social services of hospitals, health insurances and general practitioners in combination with residential counselling and information about ambulant and complementary services helps many clients to remain independent at home and often results in the extension of the autonomous stage of life.

Results

Since founding aktiv55plus, the process of activating elderly citizens has constantly been developed. The full-time coordinator for activating home visits was supported by six volunteers after they completed the required training. During the project, they all took part in constant case supervision. Unfortunately, due to financial constraints, this additional support, which is crucial for the overall success of the project, was not sustainable.

In January 2006 a group, representing senior citizens was established which evolved into the senior advisory board of the city. The board raises awareness on a political level for all topics

concerning senior citizens such as transport safety or the sponsoring and installation of park benches at key intersections for pedestrians.

Since its foundation, aktiv55plus was able to place volunteers repeatedly. Their commitment and contribution resulted in many reported cases where the social isolation of senior citizens could be successfully addressed. This is supported by a study of the WHO in Radevormwald, which shows that the best improvement could be found in the quality of life of widowed citizens.

As examples of best practice the Rader Hilfsbörse, a project for neighbourly help and the Reparatur-Treff were set up. In both settings, the social component is the base of those projects.

Additional activities of aktiv55plus can only be implemented with authentication of professional concepts and thereby financial aid; e.g. the work for people with dementia and their relatives.

The involvement of citizens in the execution of capability-orientated active ageing projects have expanded and improved their perception of life as a senior citizen.

Through personal experiences and active publicity (print, film), this dynamic expands and meets approval as a future-orientated option in the main population as well as in expert groups.

Perspectives

Based on the demographic development, aktiv55plus wants to establish the initiated processes in the municipality. Complementing the care and residential counselling the association wants to

- expand the processes of activation to improve the quality of life for a wider group of citizens and other target groups (e.g. through activating home visits).
- increase the involvement of citizens (e.g. community boards, intergenerational teamwork)
- further improve the quality of existing networks (e.g. cooperation with citizens, service providers, institutions, health insurances, general practitioners)
- further develop key data in order to measure the success (e.g. determine the age of entry and causes for the use of ambulant/ stationary establishments)
- expand the planning of work with the elderly to a "planning of the life environment" for elderly people in consideration

of the needed services in the municipality (e.g. complementary mobile services, customized education and leisure programmes, comprehensive care and residential counselling)

and contribute to an overall new conception of age and ageing, that focusses on capabilities, competences and knowledge of citizens older than 55 years. Thereby the quality of life not only for elderly people but also for the community as a whole will improve. Furthermore, a constructive debate about the change in demographics based on these processes has an enormous potential of economic advantages for the community as well as for health insurances.

The supporting association is seeking to obtain the necessary financial resources to be able to achieve its aims. Constructive initiatives in this regard are existing on the municipal and federal state level and with a health service group.

A sponsorship by Sana Krankenhaus Radevormwald gGmbH from 2015 to 2019 enables aktiv55plus to intensify the activating home visits in Radevormwald. In addition, a renowned institute with a focus on social and economical income returns is interested in a research – unfortunately therefore the funding cannot be ensured. The association is also taking part in the regions contribution to *Bergisches Wasserland*, whose concept was accepted in the European promotional program LEADER.

The association's budget is composed of contributions by the county to implement care and residential counseling, member fees and donations. Donations are used strictly net for purposes in compliance with the association articles. The association is entitled to issue donation receipts.



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