

EU_SHAFE Action Plan

Louth County Council

In collaboration with
TU Dublin



EU_SHAFE

Project EU_SHAFE started in 2019, with the goal to improve policies and practices in 7 European regions by developing a comprehensive approach to Smart Healthy Age-Friendly Environments (SHAFE).

Therefore, policy alignment, collaborative efforts and sharing of good practices are the keystones to add better quality of life, more inclusive and sustainable health and social care systems and citizen's access to the services.

Through a 'learning by sharing' methodology, the consortium built a four-helix European community to exchange experiences and practices to improve multilevel policy instruments for the growth of community-based services and "ageing at home" around Europe.

After online and physical exchange and learning, we are ready to share our regional Action Plans. Each region has a different plan, unique to their regional context and needs.

This Action Plan covers the territorial area of Louth. It has been prepared by the Louth EU_SHAFE partner in collaboration with TU Dublin, in close cooperation with regional stakeholders and with the Managing Authorities of the selected Policy Instruments.

List of Actions included in the Action Plan

Number / Title Action	Description
ACTION 1: Deliver ageism awareness training to key sectors in the next Louth Local Economic and Community Plan 2022- 2028	<p>Policy addressed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Louth Local Economic and Community Development Plan 2022 – 2028 <p>As it is no longer possible to address the Border, Midland and Western Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020 and as the new Programme is in transition a decision has been taken to make a submission to the Louth LECP to make policy changes in the area of ageism.</p> <p>By focusing on local policy instruments that are currently being reviewed, it is an opportune moment for the action plan to make a direct impact on age friendly solutions and to design policy to reflect this. It is envisaged its outcomes will demonstrate to other policymakers the importance of including SHAFE-related policy actions in their documents</p> <p>Inspired by Good Practice <i>Gizadiberri – Bizkaia (Communication & Information domain)</i>, this action aims to combat ageism by raising awareness of the topic through ageism training workshops to key sectors within County Louth.</p>

General Information

Project	EU_SHAPE – “Europe enabling Smart Healthy Age-Friendly Environments”
Partner organization Other Partner organisation	Louth County Council Technological University Dublin
Country	Ireland
NUTS2 region	Level II – Border, Midland and Western Region
Contact person	Grainne Cumiskey, EU_SHAPE Project Coordinator
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Action 1 – Deliver ageism awareness training to key sectors in the next Louth Local Economic and Community Plan 2022- 2028

Policy Context

The policy instrument that the Action Plan aims to impact is:

Louth Local Economic and Community Development Plan 2022 – 2028

To set the policy context, Ireland is divided into two regions in terms of ERDF/ESF funding. Louth County Council sits under the Border, Midland and Western Region. Management of ERDF funding takes place through three Regional Assemblies. Louth County Council is a member of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly. Regional assemblies are statutory bodies under the Local Government Acts. Councils then have a statutory obligation to deliver Local Economic and Community Plans, which must align with both National policies and the Regional Spatial and Economic Plans for each region.

Therefore, there is a direct correlation between the Border, Midland and Western ROP, through the Regional Spatial and Economic Plans, and the Louth Local Economic and Community Plan.

The Local Economic and Community Plans (LECP) support the sustainable development of our counties. They are a statutory document which forms the local element of the national development framework and support collaboration to increase the quality of life in our communities. The primary aim of the LECP is to set out, for a six-year period, the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of the relevant local authority area, both by the Local Authority directly and in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders.

The LECP is owned by the Local Authority and is developed through the Strategic Policy Committee for Economic Development and Enterprise (Economic elements) while the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) develop the community elements. The final draft plan must be approved by both the Municipal District Committees (Local Authority members), Government Departments and the Regional Assembly. The LECP has a statutory linkage with the regional plans and must align with them, bringing a regional dimension to the plan. The adoption of the plan is a reserved function of the

Local Authority. Some discussion with the Chief Executive has indicated that an objective on addressing ageism would be welcome within the plan.

Investment for Growth and Jobs programme	NO
European Territorial Cooperation programme	NO
Other regional development policy instrument	NO

Details of the Action Envisaged

1. Need addressed

According to the WHO's Global Report on Ageism, ageism is widespread in institutions, laws and policies across the world. It not only damages individual health and dignity but also economies and societies. Despite its pervasive nature and harmful impacts, ageism still lacks a solid knowledge base of dedicated research, information, data and analysis of trends.¹

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on older persons highlighting the underlying societal, legislative and policy structures that support long-standing assumptions about 'age' across the life course. In particular, the viewing of older people during the pandemic as a homogenous group of frail people in need of protection not only isolated older people in their homes it also led to a reduction in their autonomy to make individual health decisions.²

Addressing ageism is critical for creating a more equal world in which the dignity and rights of every human being are respected and protected. This is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the world's agreed blueprint for building a future of peace and prosperity for all on a healthy planet.

According to a 2011 Atlantic Philanthropies report, ageism in Ireland affects older adults in a number of ways, including;

- Age based limitations in health and social care treatments and benefits
- Workplace ageism and a prejudicial age based retirement
- Age based limitations in Financial Services
- Stereotypical media representations³

We have based our action plan on the areas highlighted within the report.

¹ Global Report on Ageism. Geneva: World Health Organisation; 2021

² Ibid.

³ "Determining the true scope of ageism throughout Ireland", *The Atlantic Philanthropies*, March 24 2011 accessed on line at <https://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/stories/determining-true-scope-ageism-throughout-ireland>

Our research to date has demonstrated that ageism is widespread in the media, the health sector, financial services and the workplace and that there is a need for ageism awareness training. As the world's population ages, now would seem an opportune time to address this issue. It is the intention of this Action Plan to have an action inserted into the policy instrument to deliver ageism awareness training to key sectors within the county to raise awareness of the issue.

2. Overview of the Policy Improvement that this Action refers to

The Local Economic and Community Plans (LECP) support the sustainable development of our counties. They are a statutory document which forms the local element of the national development framework and support collaboration to increase the quality of life in our communities.

Including ageism within the policy framework of the LECP will ensure that the topic is addressed through a designated funded action within the plan. Addressing ageism within the county through the LECP will not only raise awareness of both overt and covert ageism within our services but will change the behavior of service deliverers removing barriers to full participation of older people in all aspects of cultural, economic and social life in their communities. Highlighting the need to age-proof policies, actions and language within a statutory document will be a positive by-product of the envisaged action. Any action delivered through the LECP will reach across of the representative sectors of the LCDC thus providing a broad basis for delivery of ageism awareness training and reaching the maximum number of people.

The LCDC is made up of representatives from both the public and private sectors. Members are drawn from the health, social welfare, education and business sectors along with representatives from the Community and Voluntary Sector. The Economic and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee is made up of Elected members and representatives from the Social Inclusion sector, Community sector and Business/Commercial sector.

3. The background

Ageism is a type of discrimination that involves prejudice against people based on their age. Similar to racism and sexism, ageism involves holding negative stereotypes about people of different ages. Ageism affects everyone, both young and old. Age discrimination can be seen in a wide variety of settings and situations including the workplace and in healthcare.

According to the WHO's Global Report on Ageism, ageism is widespread in institutions, laws and policies across the world. In our research for this action plan we have focused on instances of ageism in services such as health and finance, ageism in workplace settings and ageism in the media.

Our research to date demonstrates that ageism is widespread in the media, the health sector, financial services and the workplace both globally and in Ireland. Our research has highlighted the following examples:

Media

A 2020 report by the Centre for Ageing Better, acknowledged that while age stereotypes vary those about older people are "almost always more negative than they are positive".⁴

During Covid 19 there have been many examples of the negative representation of older people in both print and online media, portraying older people as not only more susceptible to the disease but also as vectors of the disease and as such more of a risk to others (TILDA 2020).⁵ An extreme example was a Daily Telegraph article dated 3rd March 2020 in which it was posited that from an economic viewpoint that Covid 19 might be beneficial in the long term by "disproportionately culling elderly dependents" (TILDA 2020).⁶

The Irish Gerontological Society issued a media release on the 22/04/2020 advising print and broadcast media to "Mind their Language".⁷

Dr. O'Shea, consultant geriatrician appealed to the print and broadcast media to use non-ageist language, "Age is an important social issue and ageism is a serious problem. In recent years, ageist terms such as 'bed blocker', which is both stigmatising and discriminatory, have become commonplace in media reports".⁸

Media representations tend to reflect a narrative of ageing that is associated with inevitable decline. Within print media, older people are often characterised as being more of a burden than a benefit and the use of negative figures of speech such as 'grey tsunami', 'demographic cliff' and 'demographic time bomb' again present older age as a burden (These negative

⁴ "Dodderly but Dear, Stereotypes of Age and Ageing", *Centre for Ageing Better*, March 2020

⁵ Dr. Mark Ward and Dr. Rose Anne Kenny, "Older Adults Experience of ageism during the Covid 19 pandemic", *The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA)*, December, 2020 accessed online at <https://www.doi.org/10.38018/TildaRb.2020-01>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ O'Shea n.4

⁸ Dr. Diarmuid O'Shea, "Mind your language", *Irish Gerontological Society*, April 21, 2020 accessed online at <https://www.irishgerontology.com/news/latest-news/mind-your-language>



portrayals only serve to foster negative feelings toward the older population.⁹

Health

There is documentary evidence available of negative attitudes towards older patients by health care providers. In a 2016 TILDA report titled “How Negative Attitudes towards Ageing affect Health in Later Life” the author concluded that “The way we think about, talk about and write about ageing may have direct effects on health. Everyone will grow older and if negative attitudes towards ageing are carried throughout life they can have a detrimental, measurable effect on mental, physical and cognitive health.”¹⁰

In an Irish context, an article entitled Ageism and Clinical Research in the Irish Medical Journal reported that of the 226 of which were determined to be relevant for the study, 31 trials (13.7%) excluded participants based solely on an arbitrary upper age limit. 69.2 years of age was the mean upper age limit used across the trials. The upper age limit was most notable in studies submitted by physicians specialising in neurology and psychiatry (12 of 22 studies, 55%) followed by oncology (5 of 21 studies, 23%). Of the studies excluding participants based on an arbitrary upper age limit almost 39% (12 of 31 trials) related to trials specialising in neurology /psychiatry, over 22% (7 of 31 trials) were gastroenterology trials, while over 16% (5 of 31 trials) were haematology /oncology trials.¹¹

Another aspect of age discrimination relates to the way health care providers communicate with older adults. Studies have shown evidence that patronising and ineffective communication often characterise dialogue between older people and health care providers. Doctors are also more likely to be less patient, less respectful, less involved and less optimistic with older patients than with younger patients. While a poor bedside manner can be an emotionally negative experience for an older patient and their family members, health care provider negative communication styles may also have a negative health effect for the patient.¹²

Financial Services

In terms of ageism in financial services there is ample evidence of ageism across the car, travel and health insurance industries in Ireland.

A cost comparison analysis carried out by insuremycars.ie, revealed that car insurance quotes can differ by up to 200% for older drivers. The report declared that some insurers are hitting certain drivers with premiums that could result in over 60s paying as much as €800 more in premium costs. As older customers are more likely to simply “accept and renew” this is a worrying trend according to Jonathan Hehir, Managing Director of www.insuremycars.ie.¹³

⁹ “Dodderly but Dear, Stereotypes of Age and Ageing. N4

¹⁰ Deirdre Robertson, “How Negative Attitudes towards Ageing affect Health in Later Life”, *The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA)*, January, 2016

¹¹ R. Briggs, S Robinson and D. O’Neill, “Ageism and Clinical Research”, *Irish Medical Journal*, 2012, 10 accessed online at <https://www.lenus.ie/handle/10147/251176>, accessed on 26/01/2022

¹² Mary F. Wyman, Sharon Shiovitz-Ezra and Jurgen Bengel, “Ageism in the Health Care System: Providers, Patients and Systems”, in *Contemporary Perspectives on Ageing*, ed. Liat Ayalon and Clemens Tesch-Rome accessed online at <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-319-73820-8>

¹³ “Older Drivers paying up to three times more for their Car Insurance” accessed online at

In relation to travel insurance an article on the RTE website in June 2019 stated that people over 65 will generally pay more for their insurance based on an escalating scale dependent on age. The article stated that not all insurers will provide cover to over 65s and some will only provide insurance to those with private health insurance.¹⁴

Switcher.ie, a cost comparison website confirmed this and mentioned further that as you move into your 70s and 80s finding cover tends to become even more difficult. The reason provided for this is that insurers do not wish to take on the risk of older adults needing more expensive medical care while on holiday.¹⁵ Among those insurers who do provide cover most have a maximum age limit for annual cover meaning that some older people have to purchase single trip cover which is more expensive. For an age group with already reduced income this could be seen as yet another ageist charge on our older people.

The Health Insurance Authority's Annual Report 2017, stated that people over 60 are paying significantly higher health insurance premiums than younger people. In fact the report shows that over 60s pay 33% more on average than younger people because of "careful market segmentation by insurers".¹⁶ The HIA recommends that people switch insurers to save money, as we have already seen older people are less likely to do this and in particular feel a sense of loyalty to their long term provider.¹⁷

Currently, with the upcoming withdrawal of Ulster Bank for the Irish market, older people are experiencing ageism in trying to open new bank accounts in alternative banking institutions. One such bank is insisting on online registration with the uploading of documentation. For older people, with little or no digital skills this is a barrier to their full participation in services.

Workplace

Age discrimination is alive and kicking in the Irish workplace according to an article published in the Irish Times in April 2021. While this is illegal under the Employment Equality Acts (1998 – 2015) the article states that according to those working in the field, little has changed in the last 20 years. The majority of age-related claims against employers in Ireland concern three areas, recruitment, promotion and retirement. This is due to both conscious bias in relation to getting an interview and unconscious bias in relation to capability as people age.¹⁸

Stereotyping of older people in the workplace is persistent and widespread, according to Dr.

<https://insuremycars.ie/uncategorized/older-drivers-paying-up-to-three-times-more-for-car-insurance-2/>
accessed on 15/02/2022

¹⁴ "Travel insurance; don't leave home without it", RTE, June, 2019 accessed online at <https://www.rte.ie/news/business/2019/0607/1054026-travel-insurance-dont-leave-home-without-it/>
accessed on 15/02/2022

¹⁵ Martin Lane, "How to get travel insurance as you get older", accessed online at <https://switcher.ie/travel-insurance/travel-insurance-elderly/> accessed on 26/01/2022

¹⁶ Conor Pope, "Over- 60s pay 33% more than younger people for health insurance", *The Irish Times*, August, 3, 2018, accessed online at <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/health/over-60s-pay-33-more-than-younger-people-for-health-insurance-1.3584670> accessed on 26/01/2022

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Olive Keogh, "Age discrimination alive and well in Irish workplaces", *The Irish Times*, April, 16, 2021 accessed online at <https://www.irishtimes.com/business/work/age-discrimination-alive-and-well-in-irish-workplaces-1.4532213> accessed on 12/01/2022

Trudy Corrigan, a researcher with the DCU based National Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Centre. This stereotyping includes assumptions that once a person reaches a certain age they are unwilling to change and are less able to acquire new skills, especially in technology. Dr Corrigan goes on to state that capacity to learn is generally unaffected by age and evidence is rarely found to support this opinion.¹⁹ Dr. Corrigan believes that organisation need to create a more supportive HR climate to assist in addressing ageist attitudes in the workplace and that opportunities for training and reskilling would be welcomed by older workers.²⁰

However, there is in particular a belief that older workers are resistant to change in particular in relation to technology. According to the 2019 William Fry – Age in the Workplace report 61% of those surveyed believe that older workers are inhibited by technological change. Technology now also plays a major role in how jobs are advertised with 37% of employers in the William Fry survey saying that this is their main method of recruitment. However, in opposition to this the survey also stated that unemployed people including older cohorts are twice as likely as those in employment to look for print advertisements rather than online.²¹

Conclusion

Our research to date has highlighted that ageism is prevalent in our society across its institutions, laws and policies. This has demonstrated that there is a real need to tackle ageism in our society. Taking inspiration from the Good Practice – Gizadiberri, now would seem an opportune time to address this issue. UN Agenda for 2030, Goal 3 is to “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”. The Goals contain a commitment to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data, which should be disaggregated by age as well as characteristics such as gender and disability. The collection and collation of such data on ageism is essential for ensuring effective policies and interventions. Ageism is a topic which has not yet been addressed in a cohesive manner in County Louth and the action plan is centred around making a change to the LECP policy to include and highlight the need to address ageism.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ “Age in the Workplace”, William Fry – Employment Report 2019, accessed online at www.williamfry.com

4. Specific Activities and Timeframe

Activity Number	Description	Outputs	Timeframe
1	Desk Research on Ageism	Draft paper on the issue of ageism globally and locally	August – September 2022
2	Consultation with stakeholders	Contact stakeholders and identification of the issue	October 2022 to January 2023
3	Draft Recommendation	Draft recommendation report	February to March 2023
4	Design and submit recommendation	Design and publish submission	April to June 2023

5. Players involved

Name of Organization	Role in Action Plan
Louth County Council	Lead
TU Dublin	Collaborating Partner

6. Costs and Funding Sources

Item	Costs	Funding sources
Desk Research	Louth County Council	Covered by salary of co-ordinator
Stakeholders Consultation	Age Friendly Budget	€1,500
Draft Recommendation	Louth County Council	Covered by salary of co-ordinator
Design and submit	Age Friendly Budget	€1,000

7. Monitoring

The action plan will be monitored through bi-monthly meetings with the EU_SHAPE Local Action group and with the Age Friendly County Coordinator along with quarterly reports to OPF.

Official Signature(s)

Date:	11/05/2022
Name	Grainne Cumiskey
Signature	<p><i>Grainne Cumiskey</i></p> <p>Stamp of the organization (if available) 30 NOV 2022 Oifigi an Príomhfheidhmeannach</p>

