



2nd Newsletter – July 2025

Development of the FRIEND Programme: promoting friendships for the wellbeing of older adults and preparing trainers

The FRIEND consortium has worked hard during the past months with focus groups in the 5 countries: Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Poland. The inputs emerged from the focus and discussion groups were compiled in national and global reports, highlighting the main features to be included in the Toolkit.

Objectives of the FRIEND Programme

The FRIEND Programme exists in the framework of the epidemic of loneliness and the loose of social interactions in our society. It works to enhance the social skills of older adults in order to prevent and/or reduce the risk of social isolation and loneliness.

“A day without a friend is
like a pot without a single
drop of honey left inside

Winnie the Pooh

The Focus Groups



The FRIEND programme draws inspiration from the Friendship Enrichment Programme (FEP) developed and tested in the Netherlands by Nan Stevens (2001). To better adapt the content and format, the FRIEND consortium ran 15 iterative focus groups between July 2024 and April 2025. The focus groups were held both with older adults and with professionals and/or volunteers with experience working with older adults. Some XX people participated in the focus groups.

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The focus groups were held in 3 phases, called iterations, in which the feedback collected served to develop the materials both for the FRIEND Programme targeted at older adults, as well as to the Train-the-Trainers course. The inputs collected and conclusions allowed us to define the structure of the programmes, to reshape the methods and techniques used, and to refine the materials created.

The methodology applied was very appreciated by all participants, as they felt heard, involved and engaged in the development and adaptation of a sound programme to the contemporary days.



Train-the-Trainer Programme



After intensive months of development and creation of learning materials, the consortium kicked-off the Train-the-Trainers programme! It was combined with 2 online sessions and 2 face-to-face days in the beautiful city of Aveiro in Portugal, hosted by Aproximar, the portuguese partner.

The Train-the-Trainers was a special moment in which we saw live our previous work and how the outputs turn into real-practice. The online sessions covered more theoretical topics on social isolation and social interaction across the life course. The face to face days were intensive, constructive and with plenty of meaningful insights. All participants engaged in friendly interactions and gained powerful motivation for the implementation of the FRIEND Programme.



Some quotes from the participants:

"It is quite interesting to go deep on each session...I really appreciated that each session has a different topic and a precise direction, but you could apply flexibility" (Trainer, Italy)

"During the training, I had the possibility to learn hands-on techniques and learn how to work, how to deliver sessions for the participants [older adults]...that was for me an excellent occasion to practice the techniques and how do it work" (Trainer, Poland)

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Next Steps

In the coming months, the project partners will implement the pilot-sessions FRIEND Programme with community-dwelling older adults, in close cooperation with local learning centres from each territory. Stay tuned for the first results.

To find out more and stay updated on the next steps of the project visit our website:
<https://friendproject.eu/>

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