



Pilot fiche O1.5

# Move and Sea

## Part 1: The pilot

**Pilot name: Move and Se(a)**

Located: City of Ostend, Belgium



Figure 3: Map of location of Ostend

*Operational context*

The City of Ostend is located on the coast of Belgium and has a population of 71,450. The older population has been increasing in recent years within the city. This pilot though focused upon two specific areas within Ostend. The first area was the inner-city area which is 2.03 km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of 15,386 of which 41% belong to the target group for SAIL. This area was the focus of the Silver sessions exercise group. The second location was a larger area of 7.25 km<sup>2</sup> with a population of 6,264 where 22% of the population were in the SAIL target group. In this area the pilot aimed to help older people overcome loneliness by introducing a taxibike to enable them to make short journeys which they were unable to undertake on foot due to mobility issues.

*Pilot overview*

Previous research had identified that within the City of Ostend older people were less active than in other areas. Therefore, the SAIL project aimed to alter the behaviour of its older residents and focused upon those over 60 years of age. The data also highlighted that the age of 80 years was a key point in terms of participation in physical activity as after this age there was a marked decline in mobility. A particular issue for the city was also the recorded rate of falls by older people. Therefore, an initiative that could

encourage physical activity and promote greater mobility among its citizens was developed. A key issue was that there were few opportunities for people aged over 65 years to participate in exercise and there were even less opportunities for people of 70 - 80 years. Much of the development work for this pilot was the bringing together of organisations which worked with or represented older people.

To encourage a greater participation in physical activity the project developed several initiatives that included developing walking routes around the city and creating exercise sessions for older people. The SAIL pilot also supported the introduction of walking routes by making the routes both more attractive and accessible to older citizens by installing benches at regular intervals on which people could rest and ensuring that the routes included facilities such as public toilets.

Exercise classes were first introduced in April 2019 and attracted participants with an average age of 77 years. The popularity of the sessions led to a second session being scheduled at an alternative time. This session was based indoors whereas the other session was held outdoors when the weather was good.

Another initiative was to introduce a new form of transport for older to encourage them to extend the area they circulated within. The scheme involved the use of rickshaws to take older residents on journeys that despite being relatively short were beyond a distance that they could walk. The start of this scheme was delayed due to funding issues but once running it was noted that it was of key importance to have cyclists who had key interpersonal skills that enhanced the experience for the older person beyond the basic purpose of travelling from one place to another.

Although there were some administrative and logistic issues to overcome the new initiatives were interesting for other organisations and Ostend welcomed officials from other areas to observe how the pilot activities had been introduced.

#### *Key issues for the pilot*

A strength of this project was that research already existed that could be used to define the needs of the older citizens of the city. The challenges for the pilot were gaining sufficient funding to realise the planned activities and also other resource issues such as having difficulty finding venues suitable for the exercise sessions. The pilot also identified

the need to organise activities close to where older people lived as being too far away reduced participation.



Participants from Move and Se(a) pilot enjoying some exercise together in Ostend.

## Part 2: Evaluation

## PILOT 5 OSTEND: MOVE AND SEA

### *Introduction*

In the beginning of 2018 pilot 5 Move and Sea was initiated in Ostend. The general purpose of the pilot was to motivate elderly people (65+) to be more physically active by organizing group activities and making it possible for them to walk longer distances. Specifically, Move at sea created walking routes in the Ostend area, equipped with benches situated at every 250 meters walking distance, to encourage elderly people to take a longer walk. The benches were placed (to the extent possible) in the interesting surrounding allowing walkers to admire the views. The placement of AED's in the proximity of these benches was for the safety reasons as well as to make people more aware of the AED's functions and importance. The walking routes with accompanying benches as well as other facilities such as restaurants, café's and/or restrooms were placed in touristic brochures and catalogs. In this way not only the citizens of Ostend being a primary target group of this initiative, but also tourists visiting Ostend region were much better informed about these initiatives. Moreover, the Move at sea project included a series of 'Start 2 walk' sessions involving exercises performed at the benches.

### *Results*

Although the main purpose of Move at sea was to reassure more physical activation of elderly people, the project resulted in creation of bonding between participants as the major outcome. The results of a survey conducted on small sample of members of the Move at sea initiatives demonstrate high participants' satisfaction of the quality of the organized activities. While a big challenge of the region West-Flanders is that people tend to be rather reserved, the most striking result was to see that around 80% of the sample mentioned "social contacts" as a main advantage of the project. Specifically, when asked "What did you enjoy the most about this project?" respondents mentioned: "being together with other people", "getting to know other people", "laughing and making fun together" and "becoming friends". When asked whether the participation in the project made a difference in their life, next to "feeling fitter", "being more active", "being able to walk longer distances", "leaving a car aside" respondents indicated "getting to know other people" and "combining physical activity with socializing" as main advantages. More

informal interviews indicated that the participants appreciated foremost the social aspect of the activities, while becoming fitter and energized at the same time.

### *Sustainability*

Beside receiving lots of (press) attention in the Ostend area, Move at sea got famous in other municipalities in Belgium (e.g. Bruges, Ghent, Kortrijk), including mention at the European Parliament congress devoted to best practices regarding physical activities among seniors. The popularity of the project was due to strong emphasis on communication. The flyers and catalogs were spread at the local pharmacies, hospitals or health insurance companies. According to the manager of the project, the most important source of advertisement were the participants themselves, who talked and encouraged others to take part in this initiative, took the flyers to their doctors, physiotherapist and/or ergo therapists visits. As different municipalities got to know about the project and its successful results, new meetings and brainstorming sessions are scheduled to share the ideas about this kind or similar initiatives. The emphasis is on discussing improvements and further development of the project in co-operation with different partners to strengthen the project results as well as to ensure sustainability of the behavioral changes acquired by the participants. According to the project manager, it is highly recommended to continue cross-national cooperation, to broaden the horizons, learn from each other and co-create best practices to keep elderly physically active on the daily basis.