

## Eching project visit

### ISA network meeting 1-2 June 2012

#### Eching: a citizen's initiative

*Eching* is a suburb of München with 13.500 inhabitants. The Verein "*Älter werden in Eching*" operates a multigenerational service centre in the heart of the municipality with an activity centre, homecare team, therapies and swimming pool. Above the service centre are 21 units sheltered housing for older people, in another building nearby 30 more sheltered units plus a group home for 8 demented people. A wide range of services is offered to older people. The service centre is a very good example of architecture. It looks like new after 17 years of use.

The Verein (association), founded 20 years ago with active support of the mayor has about 500 individual and institutional members. It has a social services contract with the municipality which covers about one third of the operating cost and it hires the service centre and the sheltered housing from the municipality. It employs 17 full-time professionals and 120 volunteers. There are also 30 staff on small contracts additional to social allowances. For more information see [www.isa-platform.eu](http://www.isa-platform.eu).

#### Why this initiative?

In the late eighties, Eching was very active in terms of social policies for young people but rather a "white spot" on the map concerning the care of older people. It was a fast growing suburb with a young population, no nursing home and only two ambulant district nurses employed by the municipality. No established care or service provider was active in Eching at that time. Supported by an initiative from the municipal council and an active role played by the mayor, the citizens association "Getting Older in Eching" was founded in 1989. The association is open to inhabitants of Eching as well as to partners like care and service providers, churches and educational institutions. It was meant to be religious and political neutral, working only for the interest of the people of Eching. It has a quasi-monopoly in care and services for older people; besides there is only one private provider active in Eching who serves mainly the higher income groups. Its strong points are the democratic structure which allows for constant adaptation to changing needs, and the involvement of volunteers and social jobs. It has drawn much attention in Germany and abroad because citizens are not only active at the operational level but also in the steering board.

#### Limitations of the Eching model

The Eching model has not yet really been submitted to a stress test because the number of really frail old people, mostly over 80 years, is still low; but this will grow fast in the near future. At present, people with intensive, round-the-clock care needs cannot be served by the local team, except the 8 people in the group home for the demented. Yearly about 6 old people with the *Pflegestufe 3* (intensive long-term care) must leave Eching for a nursing home in one of the neighbouring

communities. The *Verein* has tried to start a daycentre and short-term care centre for this target group, but it had to be closed again because the nursing homes in the region can offer these services at a lower price and they have an overcapacity. The reason that Eching lost this competition is that the German care insurance system offers higher payments to institutional care compared with ambulant care. Political initiatives to create a level playing field have failed so far. To end with, the Eching model has as yet been not very outreaching offering care services brought home into dispersed individual houses, including house adaptations. Besides home help services and neighbourly help attention is being concentrated on the service centre and the sheltered housing sites.

#### More citizens' initiatives from different countries

Integrated service areas initiated and operated by citizen's organisations are still rare or nonexistent in the countries participating in the ISA meeting. In the German state **Bavaria** itself there are about 50 similar but younger initiatives, mainly in the evangelical western and northern part. In the whole of **Germany** a contest for *Quartierskonzepte* (integrated service areas) had shown 5 years ago that about 25% of these projects were citizen's initiatives. But most of these do not have the strength and continuity of Eching. In the **Netherlands** there are some examples of integral citizen's initiatives on housing, services and care in small villages of around 1000 inhabitants like Elsendorp. In a rich neighbourhood of Amsterdam the citizens' initiative "ILC Zorg voor later" (*care for later*) has founded in 2010 the cooperative "Stadsdorp Zuid" (*Urban Village South*, 200 members), following the example of the American Village movement. Key words are: mutual help, common activities and cooperative purchase of care and services (expert: Kees Penninx, Movisie Institute, [activage@kpnmail.nl](mailto:activage@kpnmail.nl)).

The Village Movement in the **United States** itself now counts around 50 local projects, some in existing residential areas, some in new built ones, and originated from dissatisfaction with the bad quality and high cost of existing care and service providers. People have to pay most services themselves anyway, so why not organise them yourselves? Boston is the archetype. A large array of voluntary and professional services is organised in order to support the independent living of older people (website: the village-to-village network; expert: Dr Andrew Sharlach, University of California, Berkeley, [sharlach@berkeley.edu](mailto:sharlach@berkeley.edu)).

#### ISA network

The ISA network is an informal initiative by experts from Germany, Switzerland and Netherlands and was started in 2009. It focuses on Integrated Service Areas as a concept which helps older people to live independently in a normal residential area as long as possible. The aim of the network is (a) to describe and analyse best local practices in relation to the national context, (b) to organise annual expert meetings on the spot and (c) publicize the results on the website [www.isa-platform.eu](http://www.isa-platform.eu). At the Eching conference the network was extended with European members from Sweden and with overseas members from the US and Japan. It was also decided to ask new European members from the UK and Denmark. Members can be either persons (experts, scientists) or institutes (research

centres, centres of innovation). One institutional European member will apply for European subsidy for network activities and dissemination of knowledge for the years to come. All members are invited to raise some funding from their own country. The focus will remain on Integrated Service Areas with as a special theme: citizen's initiatives and citizen participation.

Members will contribute with the writing and updating of best practices and national background articles on their country. Also they will send in thematical articles and research findings in English – when available- which are relevant to the subject. The network will organise yearly meetings including project visits. Results will be published on the website, which must be better known and more frequently visited by members of other relevant networks.

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