

T.A.A.F.E.

Towards Alpine Age-Friendly Environment

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WP T2

Deployment of the TAAFE model in the Alpine Space pilot areas

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A growing ageing population and increasing number of isolated older adults demand new approaches and political commitment. Therefore, the WHO developed the concept of sustainable age-friendly environments (AFE), using an integrative approach to optimize the social and physical environments and promote active, healthy ageing and participation in society. The T.A.A.F.E. project uses this concept to build a participatory framework - T.A.A.F.E. model - for developing age-friendly environment and an improved delivery of services in the Alpine Space (AS)

AT A GLANCE

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1. Introduction

The present document aims to collect the results of the TAAFE model concretization. It adopts a lessons-learned approach with the intent to provide a timely account of the entire process - from the identification of the TRIO to the planning of the priority- focusing on the principal strengths and challenges encountered.

The TAAFE model is meant to serve as a paradigm that can be adopted by the public authorities of the Alpine Space who wish to implement actions or programs intended to achieve an age-friendly environment through a participatory approach. It was therefore tested in the five pilot sites of the project: Treviso, Italy, Mössingen, Germany, Feldbach, Austria, Marseille, France, and Žiri, Slovenia. Such a test made it possible to gather useful information about the model's key features: on one side the construction and functioning of the TRIO and the Local Action Group as innovative operational tools to sustain a participative approach in services creation and delivery; on the other its principal steps, namely the need assessment, the identification of a priority on which to act to make the local context more age-friendly and the identification of an action plan to respond to this priority. Participation within the TAAFE model is conceived as an integration of a bottom-up approach, whereby citizens are active participants in decision-making logics of community life, and a top-down one, according to which policymakers are the authors of decisions and measures to be undertaken. Intended as an alternative to the traditional binomial policymakers-providers /citizens-end-users, this crisis is a complex undertaking that requires a two-level action: a strong citizens involvement and engagement, with the multiple complexities related to conveying the meaning and the practices of participation among population; a concrete commitment of policy-makers, who must be open to negotiating their decision-making power. Since it represents a keystone of the proposed model, a section of the deliverable is therefore reserved to cover the themes of the engagement and commitment of the parties involved. Each paragraph opens with a selection of sentences extrapolated from the information reported by the partners during the evidence gathering. The sentences have been chosen based on two main criteria: on the one hand because particularly emblematic in representing some analogies between pilots, therefore able to illuminate elements of potentially generalizable strength and weakness of the model; on the other, because useful to highlight some significant differences in the implementation related to the local specificities that contributed to stress it, showing its potential vulnerabilities but also its great flexibility and malleability. Each section is then organized by keywords conveying what emerged as the most relevant factors to be considered at each stage of the process. The document concludes with a section dedicated to the maintenance and development of the model at the local level over time, once again adopting a "lessons-learned" point of view focused on the practices and dynamics at work among the actors involved. Also in this case, an attempt was made to extrapolate some continuity elements between the pilot experiences and particularly eloquent indications capable of serving as generalizable guidelines.

2. Local implementation and lessons learned on composing and working with the TRIO

According to the methodology at the basis of the TAAFE model, TRIO constitutes the key element to guide the participative approach implementation leading to the identification of a priority to work on to improve the age-friendliness in the local context. Core engine of the process, it is composed by three figures: an older adults' representative, an administration employee, and a methodological facilitator. Such a composition aims to put together the community with the institution in a collaborative frame. Each figure presents specific characteristics and has a precise part in the group: the older adults' representative is expected to have a deep knowledge of the territory and a spread network of relationships to be able to act as the over 65 citizens' spokesperson, paying particular attention to the "hard to reach" ones; the administration employee acts as an intermediary representing on the one side the strategy of local authorities, and bringing on the other the needs and the suggestions coming from the community to policy-makers; finally, the methodological facilitator plays a role of process supervisor, ensuring its quality and the adherence to the participative paradigm (for more information on the TAAFE Model see D.T1.1.1 TAAFE Model).

In each pilot site, the TRIO has been created following the above-mentioned criteria, reserving particular attention to adapt its composition to contextual peculiarities and necessities. TRIO has then acted in close cooperation with the Local Action Group towards the identification of an age-friendly-related priority to work on (for more information on these topics see D.T2.2.1 Pilot Priority Domains Document). Moving from the five pilots' implementation experiences, this section examines the lessons learned from testing the TRIO as the core feature of the TAAFE model: it first concentrates on the path of TRIO composition, showing what has proved effective and what, conversely, appeared more challenging in managing members identification. It lingers then on the dynamics of making it work, focusing on the strengths and criticalities of its internal administration and operability.

2.1 Composing the TRIO

In analyzing the process of TRIO composition, the attention has been reserved to the local management of members' choice, with a special eye for the representative of the older citizens and the administrative employee. In each pilot site, the methodological facilitator used to be the researchers of the partner organizations, therefore the choice, which was in any case made on the basis of the indications provided by WP1, was less affected by external

factors. The focus has been directed particularly on the following elements: the time required to identify the members, the actual number of persons involved, the eventual attention to gender representativeness, and, finally, the name given to the group, namely if the name TRIO was maintained or if it has been chosen another one.

“It took some time to put the TRIO together.” (DE)

“It took us about 6 months to get the agreement of a person wishing to represent the elderly.” (FR)

“The choice of the senior required about 4 months.” (IT)

“Having two administration employees permits to put together different competencies: that of social worker and that of formal procedures. It also helps managing the relationship with policymakers.” (IT)

“Having two methodological facilitators in the TRIO allows for a joint reflection on the communication process and is therefore favorable.” (AT)

“Sometimes it is difficult being the sole facilitator because you would need a discussion on the ongoing process and also a practical support to manage the interaction with the various interlocutors.” (IT)

“(…) balance between male and female representatives and that people came from different parts of Feldbach.” (AT)

“Gender representation was not a selection criterion. A volunteering base has been an important criterion (…).” (FR)

“Representatives of the older generation (…) are people who are willing to contribute to the development of the community.” (AT)

“We have a male and a female senior representative to include both perspectives with regards to the issue of age-friendliness.” (DE)

- Time

With regards to TRIO creation, time is an element that emerged as central in each pilot. It is therefore important to focus on composition timing since it gives information on dynamics potentially rising at a local level while proceeding to members’ identification. Specifically, the implementation highlighted that, among the various foreseen figures, the identification and engagement of the over-65 spokesperson proved to be more complex.

Having the TRIO completed asked for several months almost in each pilot. In Italy, the choice was made through the collaboration of the Municipality’s department of European community policies, two councilors, and ISRAA’s representatives. Here the Mayor asked to make the final choice on the potential candidates for representing the seniors: the names presented after a first consultation were rejected, implying a second confront to find some other ones and the following waiting for a decision on his part. Among the proposed potential candidates, the Mayor’s choice finally fell on a person he considered politically neutral and far removed from the local entrepreneurial world. In the Treviso pilot case, the

path of the older person identification reflects and is subject to precise logics of power and its exercise at the local level, impacting the timing of TRIO composition, which took about four months to conclude.

As the French TRIO experience shows, withdrawal is another factor that can contribute to influencing timing. The abandonment by a member, especially in the first steps of the journey, is a variable that cannot be overlooked. In Marseilles the identified seniors 'representative left the TRIO after some months, forcing new research, thus asking for a total of six months to reach the final composition. In this specific case, a crucial element was the discontinuity in meetings imposed by the pandemic restrictions. The purely practical difficulties this entailed, such as having to take meetings online or develop alternative and less immediate communication strategies, brought to a progressive loss of interest, effectively preventing the development of a sense of belonging, of ownership on the project's purpose which is not yet firm in the early stages. The French example suggests that TRIO composition may be subject to variability over time and that members may leave their posts, thus requesting a replacement. Although the reasons for such mutability may differ, in the case of the older adults' representative the issue of motivation is undoubtedly particularly relevant. In this regard, it should be noted that in the testing phase of the model, the representatives of the senior citizens were volunteers. The dimension of voluntariness, therefore, requires that the commitment is sufficiently high for the person to remain engaged. Since it is particularly in the starting moments that engagement and commitment are built, withdrawals are more likely to happen in such a phase, having an impact on timing.

- Community

Another important element closely related to the dimension of motivation and voluntariness to be considered in analyzing such dynamics is the capacity of the senior representative to put the common good before the personal interest. The participatory process at the heart of the TAAFE model envisages a need assessment to identify a priority on which to act to make the community more age-friendly. The outcome of this choice may not be in line with the personal interests of the representative of the seniors, potentially exposing them to a dropout or a progressive decrease of his/her interest. That's why, as well as clarifying from the outset the steps foreseen by the participatory model, the older person must have a focus and sensitivity to the community dimension and the collective good.

The case of Slovenia offers a clear example of such circumstances: as Žiri has been involved in the WHO age-friendly cities and communities programs for some years now, there was already an active group of people familiar with the theme and voluntary working on it. It was consequently much easier to identify the two older ladies who chose to act as spokespersons for the over-65 community and to keep them on board as they were largely interested and actively committed to similar initiatives. Žiri experience also illustrates how familiarity with age-friendly and participatory methods can help speed up the TRIO composition process: on the one side there was no interference of public authorities in the decision-making process; on the other, the risk of withdrawals was largely mitigated.

- Plurality

No particular critical points were found regarding the identification of the other components of the TRIO. However, what emerged as a factor of transversal importance in creating it, was that of plurality, understood both as a quantitative and qualitative characteristic. Gender plurality at first was perceived as an added value, as evidenced by the German partner who saw the representation of both genders in the spokesperson for the older adults and in the two researchers acting as methodological facilitators. The same can be said for the Austrian case, where plurality takes on a further meaning: here, in fact, the two seniors, in addition to being a man and a woman representing both genders, came from different areas of the town of Feldbach, thus bringing into the TRIO a further declination of plurality. The presence of representatives of both genders, as well as members from different parts of the community, contributes to enriching the TRIO with diverse perspectives and points of view that allow the issue of age-friendliness in the local context to be addressed and analyzed from multiple angles. The TAAFE model emphasizes the multiplicity of experiences, points of view, and positions in order to ensure the broadest possible representation of the community in the discussion of this issue. Furthermore, the Austrian experience showed that the presence of two methodological facilitators is an added value as it allows for a shared comparison and reflection on the dynamics at work and on the continuation of the project activities. It also contributes to facilitating the management of communication with the other TRIO members, the Local Action Group, and the citizens. The Italian case, on the other hand, shows a lack in this sense: having only one methodological facilitator made this exchange of opinions along the pathway and practical support in the management of activities impracticable, resulting in some phases in an excessive workload on the individual. However, the Italian case shows that the presence of two representatives of the institutional side is an advantage. Here, the figure of the administrative employee was flanked by that of the social worker. This made it possible not only to combine more competencies from a practical point of view but also to have a double look at the processes in progress. Moreover, this favored better communication with the policy-makers, as the two subjects felt mutually supported in dealing with hierarchically superior figures. The German pilot also provided for a higher number of institutional representatives. In this case, plurality reflected the local structure of political administration and is, therefore, a consequence of the need to give equal space to all administrative levels involved. The examples cited above show how the label TRIO, which was maintained in all pilot sites, refers to the type of figures involved, rather than the actual number. It thus identifies specific roles that can be implemented by several people according to the necessities and peculiarities of the local context.

Drawing conclusions from what emerged from the pilot experiences on composing the TRIO, it is possible to identify three particularly significant elements: *TIME*, which reflects power dynamics and peculiarities of the local social fabric; *COMMUNITY* as a priority that the senior should have in taking part in the process; *PLURALITY*, intended as an added value in fostering

a meeting and an exchange between different perspectives on the common theme of the age-friendly community.

2.2 Making the TRIO work

The analysis of the dynamics within the TRIO, therefore of its effective functioning as an operational tool, addressed the following elements: the eventual challenges and the strengths encountered by the figures of the TRIO in carrying out their role; what proved to be effective and what instead appeared more critical in managing internal communications and tasks accomplishment.

“More heads, more knowledge.” (SLO)

“Having six members in the TRIO felt to be the limit, as the coordination between members becomes more difficult when the group is bigger.” (AT)

“We have specific goals and ways to achieve them, this helps to monitor our progress and gives motivation (...).” (SLO)

“Regular and continuous exchange.” (AT)

“Keep track of what has been done through minutes and divide tasks showed useful to work as harmoniously as possible and to go on with the process.” (IT)

“One of the main challenges (...) was to keep all members equally informed.” (AU)

“Voluntary work (...) was sometimes challenging because it demanded a lot of motivation by the representatives of the older generation.” (AU)

“At the beginning, our senior tended to be skeptical with the concept of AFE and the co-creation perspective laying at the basis of the project, he believed it was a tokenism.” (IT)

“The senior partners have a clear vision on the topic of age-friendliness (...) there is also a high level of commitment (...).” (DE)

- Plurality

As for the composition, plurality appears again as a relevant factor. However, it is interesting to note that pilot experiences describe it ambivalently, if not antithetically: whether, as reported from Slovenian case, it absolutely configured as an added value and benefit also in the operative phase, in the Austrian one a large number of participants seemed to challenge the internal communication pathways, taking them to the limit. Although local specificities undoubtedly play a role in making certain processes, including internal communication, more fluid and easier to be guided (and here, once again, Slovenia's previous familiarity with participatory processes on the subject of AFE plays an important role), these diverse testimonies lead to conclude that it is prudent to find a good balance between the number of participants and the actual management capacity and resources of the methodological facilitator(s). If not adequately administrated, too many components can compromise the

effectiveness of communication and exchange between partners, consequently affecting the operational and organizational dimensions of TRIO's work.

- Clarity and systematicity

From a strictly practical point of view, clarity and systematicity emerged as fundamental and shared guidelines that should be applied across the different operational dimensions of collaboration, as highlighted by the Slovenian, Austrian and Italian cases. At first, it appears important to clarify everyone's role in the TRIO from the very beginning. A perimeter for each member makes it possible to divide up and tackle tasks more systematically and efficiently according to each person's skills and possibilities, thus in terms of type and quantity. Although seemingly trivial, this prevents misunderstandings about what should be done by whom and therefore avoids risky overlapping of roles and activities, preventing encroachment on the field of competence of others, wasting time and resources. Secondly, clarity and systematicity are relevant to ensure homogeneous communication and information among members: it is important to keep track of decisions taken, for example by collecting and circulating minutes after each meeting and adopting other effective and tailored channels of communication if needed depending on the interlocutor. This is a core aspect of the participatory process that guarantees transparency on the positions expressed by participants, the decision-making processes undertaken, and its outcome. It is then fundamental to be systematic in meetings, ensuring their continuity over time. The regularity of meetings helps to create and maintain the coherence of the action gradually initiated and then carried out: on the one hand it gives solidity to the process, providing evidence of the path being taken and its logic; and on the other hand it supports the building of trust and reliability in it. In this regard, identifying clear goals to be achieved is equally important. Such a way to proceed is strategic from two perspectives: from a merely practical point of view, planning consents a more fluid management of the activities to be done to reach one or more specific objectives; even more important, it contributes to providing participants with a more concrete representation of what is expected, enables them to observe the steps taken, the results progressively achieved and to maintain a clear view of the final objective. Awareness about the progress is precious to reinforce the sense of ownership over a process in which each one has a precise role, and the sense of belonging to a team which, thanks to the intertwining of its diversified competencies, is making progress.

- Volunteering

The sense of belonging and ownership, as seen above when analyzing the construction of the TRIO, is extremely significant especially with regard to the figure of the seniors' representative, as he/she is involved as a volunteer. This variable should be considered also when it comes to making the TRIO work properly, as suggested by Austrian observation. At this level not only are clarity, systematicity, and transparency key ingredients in cementing the senior's adherence to the workgroup, but it is important to keep this component in mind

when allocating tasks: a volunteer cannot be expected to devote the same number of hours and the same degree of commitment compared to those whose work is subject to remuneration. While in the implementation phase each pilot measured this effort according to both the specific individual desire and possibilities and moving from context contingencies (i.e. the local meaning and habits related to volunteering, the personal biography of the senior involved, and his/her availability), as a general rule the voluntary nature of such figure should guide the redistribution of tasks, which must be timed accordingly and, once again, should not go beyond the specific field of competence. The feeling that his/her availability is being exploited, manipulated, or used strategically, or that of being unable to perform the assigned tasks with the resulting sense of inadequacy, may give rise to demotivation and lead to withdrawal.

- Listen and welcome

It is very important that any doubts or concerns, and even criticism, are welcomed within the TRIO, especially from the methodological facilitator. Possible unfamiliarity with the concept of age-friendliness and with the participatory method underlying the TAAFE model can lead to uncertainties, to a sense of bewilderment or frustration, especially in the older person. In particular, the need to set aside a considerable amount of time for discussion and exchange, as a core element of participation, can transmit the impression of a lack of concreteness and unclarity in ideas and scopes. This risks undermining seniors' participation and commitment. Explaining, and clarifying the structure of the participative methodology and its importance to reach the final objective is, therefore, the basis for the smooth functioning of the TRIO. Similarly, discussing the theme of the age-friendly environment and its eight domains can appear too vague and overly theoretical. It is therefore essential to give concrete examples where necessary, addressing local specificities. Equally, it is useful to accept doubts or suggestions on the possible local definition of an age-friendly environment. Working on definitions and adapting them to the contextual dimension can promote recognition and ownership. In the Italian case, for example, the participatory methodology based on co-creation was viewed with deep skepticism by seniors' spokesperson, who believed it to be a bogus strategy implemented by the political party to advance its own goals. Lack of experience in the participatory methodology and projects requiring an active role of the community can lead to doubt, disorientation, and, potentially, to an attitude of distrust. In Treviso, receiving these uncertainties and/or criticisms by reiterating the underlying reasons for this way of proceeding and showing over time the concrete results obtained through this confrontation proved useful to mitigate this positioning. A diametrically opposite situation occurred in Mössingen, where the representatives of older people had a clear view of the age-friendly environment concept that contributed to fostering participation, facilitating the creation of trust in the methods and aims of the project.

In conclusion, with regards to making the TRIO work, the implementation in the pilot sites highlighted the following elements as particularly relevant: *PLURALITY*, as a component that

provides value but to be monitored as it may affect the effectiveness of TRIO's internal communication and work dynamics; *CLARITY AND SYSTEMATICITY*, to ensure the understanding of roles, of the ongoing process, the division of tasks and planning of activities; *VOLUNTEERING*, as a core issue to be borne in mind when managing the relationship with the senior and giving him/her responsibilities and tasks; *LISTEN AND WELCOME* as a necessary attitude to accommodate doubts, concerns and suggestions to improve awareness, sense of belonging, relationships and working conditions.

3. Local implementation and lessons learned on composing and working with the Local Action Group

The Local Action Group is intended as a research-advisory-working group putting together people with diverse expertise, professional and personal backgrounds. It closely cooperates with the TRIO along the path of need assessment and in the following predisposition of action to provide solutions to the identified priority. Local Action Group should be composed of older citizens having a different professional and personal background and diverse exponent of civil society such as doctors, nurses, head and teachers of school or kindergarten, councilors, member of the municipality units, experts in city planning, representant from the health care and service sector (...) for a total of about 15/20 people. Its plural formation is aimed at bringing together different perspectives, points of view, and knowledge, both in the intent of opening up the discussion on age-friendliness at the local level touching on its multiple declinations, and with the intention of gathering different resources and competencies to act on what emerges as a priority locally. For this reason, Local Action Group is also intended as malleable, so that it can adapt and respond to the specific needs that can emerge along the pathway (for more information on the TAAFE Model see D.T1.1.1 TAAFE Model).

Each pilot site took care of identifying the members of the Local Action Group by following and adapting the methodological indications provided by the WP1 leader (for more information on these topics see D.T2.2.1 Pilot Priority Domains Document). As in the case of the TRIO, this section collects the results of the partners' experiences, dwelling on difficulties and strengths encountered in the composition of the Local Action Group and in making it work.

3.1 Composing the Local Action Group

In examining the process of Local Action Group composition, the strengths and weaknesses of the diverse strategies followed to shape it at the local level have been investigated.

“The entire process of members identification and following contact asked about 4/5 months.” (IT)

“Those present in the needs assessment (...) were at a later point invited to join regular meetings of the Local Action Group.” (AT)

“(Local Action Group) is still under construction and quite fluctuating.” (FR)

“Many phone calls and e-mails, to build a personal contact and relationship (...)” (DE)

“(...) we invited members of the honorary committee, which was formed when the municipality entered the network of age-friendly cities (...) we already had a group (...) interested in this topic and willing to participate.” (SLO)

“We invited all interested people in the community to participate in the needs assessment. Those present in the needs assessment (...) were at a later point invited to join regular meetings of the Local Action Group.” (AT)

“The identification of potential Local Action Group members was made in cooperation between Treviso Municipality head of social sector, ISRAA director, the municipality employees, the councilor and the methodological facilitator. These persons were then contacted personally through email or by phone.” (IT)

“It’s easier to connect with departments and people the project members know personally (...) personal contact in advance is helpful in inviting people to a participation project.” (AT)

“(...) it is especially hard to reach out to people who have not been involved in community projects so far.” (AT)

- Time

As with the composition of the TRIO, the structuring of the Local Action Group also took quite a long time to complete in each pilot, with the sole exception of Slovenia. The timing was certainly influenced by local selection procedures. In Austria, citizens were invited to join the Local Action Group after some previous encounters dedicated to a starting need assessment. In Italy, on the contrary, the construction of the Local Action Group, which demands about four months, was the result of multiple consultations between Treviso municipality councilor for family and social affairs, municipality head of social sector, and head of ISRAA, then followed by contact with identified persons.

Moreover, once again local sensitiveness and proximity with the theme of age-friendliness and the participative methodologies can make a significant difference. In Žiri, the existence of an "honorary committee", a group of people already involved in community projects based on citizens' participation and tackling the topic, did not require an ulterior effort towards citizens engagement, making Local Action group identification quite immediate and

the response of participants positive from the very beginning. As previously noticed for the TRIO, the case of Slovenia emphasizes how the previous existence of a leveled and fertile ground that makes both citizens and public authorities familiar with these perspectives and practices, can facilitate the process and shorten the timeframe.

Ultimately, even in the case of the structuring of the Local Action Group, time is an element that has to be taken into serious account, and that calls into question the logic of power, the involvement strategies adopted, and the receptiveness and sensitivity of the local social fabric.

- Mutability

The question of timing intrinsically calls back that of the mutability of the Local Action Group composition, which is not necessarily fully formed from the outset. Indeed, the French testimony highlights the fact that members may be added during the project, for example following the identification of the priority on which to focus the action. Such priority may ask for specific skills that the already active members do not possess, thus requiring integration. However, there are many reasons for this changeability. In Italy and Austria, for example, some members who were active at an early stage gradually moved into a more aloof position after the need assessment, when the topic finally identified as a priority did not prove to be in line with their specific interests. The German experience, on the opposite, has seen a progressive enrichment in participants during the course of the project also thanks to the great networking operation carried out by the municipality administrative. The Local Action Group's flexibility and malleability is a feature of the TAAFE methodology that proved particularly suited to the composite reality encountered in the pilot sites. Withdrawals and integration are an integral part of participatory processes.

- Personal contact

Staying within the framework of German implementation, the Mössingen pilot site testimonies that personal contact can be much more effective than standard communication when involving potential Local Action Group members. Indeed, the local experience reported a significant increase in participation when adopting private phone calls or email as a contact strategy. Such tailored communication proved to be more effective than the open, generic call adopted at the very beginning. Also in the Italian case direct, personal contact was the preferred channel, through in-person meetings, via phone, or private email. Personalized communication allows highlighting the potential benefit for the organization/person in participating and to make explicit the benefit of their participation for the project's purposes. Moreover, it can be useful to clarify the aims and answer doubts and concerns from the start. Although more time-consuming in the first phase, leveraging the dimension of interest and personal and mutual benefit makes it possible to stimulate greater interest and avoid drop-outs as much as possible in the medium and long term.

- Previous knowledge

Very close to this theme is the one posed by the Austrian partner, which highlights how previous knowledge facilitates involvement in the Local Action Group. Existing contacts of the TRIO members with people, public services, and organizations can make membership more immediate and smoother. Previous relationships and contacts are a vehicle of trust, which is the glue of participation.

In addition, the partners' testimonies underline how precedent experience in active citizenship, community building, and civic participation initiatives can function as a further precondition for involvement. Antecedent knowledge, therefore, refers not only to personal relationships already in place but also to former experience in community projects and/or activities of a participatory nature similar or analogous to that proposed by TAAFE.

Participation and involvement in the civic dimension of one's own community, especially when structured through innovative models such as the one proposed by the project, is not always close to citizens' experience and comprehension. Its reception, its aims, its "reversal of perspective" is therefore not necessarily received in a fluid and immediate manner. This finding can also be extended to the institutional side, which is asked to face a decision-making pathway and a service structuring that follows different coordinates, requiring negotiation of practices for relating to citizens and responding to contextual needs.

Partners' reflections suggest that it is useful to draw on prior knowledge in both senses. However, this should not preclude a broader engagement action, which also goes in the direction of targeting the hard-to-reach. In this sense, it may be useful to later build on the network of contacts of the Local Action Group members as additional channels to reach a wider community. Although not always easy to accomplish during Local Action Group composition, connecting with the community in its multiple components must be the ultimate effort, the ambitious goal to aim for.

The keywords providing orientation on how to structure the Local Action Group and to be taken into account are: *TIME*, as a basic ingredient for its creation, depending on composition strategies adopted, contracting between decision-makers, peculiarities of the local context; *MUTABILITY*, as a contingency that characterizes participation and, as consequence, can identify the Local Action Group at various stages of the process; *PERSONAL CONTACT* and *PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE* as catalysts for participation along the engagement process.

3.2 Making the Local Action Group Work

The following section analyses the practices and operational strategies implemented by the TRIO to manage and carry out the work with the Local Action Group. According to the methodology at the core of the TAAFE model, the interaction with the Local Action Group should be based on collective meetings aimed at starting and developing sharing and

confrontation on the theme of age-friendliness and to identify and undertaken then specific actions that can offer a solution to local necessities.

Here are therefore collected indications of what proved effective to favor the continuity of participation and guarantee the fluidity of communication, exchange, and decision making between the different actors involved.

“The Local Action Group was held approximately every five weeks to maintain a certain regularity (...) In addition, we had systematic phone meetings and email exchanges with various stakeholders.” (FR)

“Individuals prefer to participate if we have well-planned meetings (...) to write the exact topic and agenda (...). It is also very important that the meetings are short, effective, and concrete. We have to be respectful of their time and be well prepared for the meeting.” (SLO)

“Adherence to communication rules is important, every participant should have their say.” (AT)

“We organized meeting with the entire Local Action Group and ad hoc ones with specific stakeholders depending on the topic to be addressed.” (IT)

“It is important to create minutes after each encounter to keep everyone updated, especially if someone did not participate.” (IT)

“It is fundamental to give participants a clear vision of the steps of the project in order to make them aware of where they are and where they go. This helps also to clarify why it is important to reserve time to the discussion while undertaking a participatory approach.” (IT)

- Regularity

The testimony of French partners, but more generally the information reported from all the partners, have highlighted how the dimension of the regularity in meetings and communication with the Local Action Group is a key component. It contributes to developing and consolidating the dialogue between the TRIO and its members and among members. Regularity makes it possible to identify the most effective channels of communication and to build and reinforce, over time, practices of interaction that are functional to the group. It is also important when there are many interlocutors around the table, and when participation is based on a voluntary dimension: the lack of continuity risks exposing the group to progressive dispersion, undermining the overall sense of presence and action towards which the group is striving. In this regard, it is fundamental to note that regularity deeply supports the perception of a structured and finalized process, equally relevant within a participative process. Moreover, it allows the identification of shared vision, language, imaginary that is core in group dynamics.

- Clarity

As well expressed by the Slovenian partner, clarity is another key ingredient. Constructing and circulating an agenda setting out the points to be covered at each encounter is critical for participants to be clear about the reasons for the meeting, its structure, and its objectives. This clarity also allows the individuals to assess whether or not the meeting is of interest to them, or to suggest other topics for the agenda. Structured guidance of the process, also from the organizational and practical point of view, can help to avoid the risk of dispersion, both in terms of components and in terms of co-design of goals and objectives. A participatory process can expose to the possibility of going off-topic, and therefore losing the reins of the process. This, consequently, can lead to loss of interest and abandonment by participants. Clarity on themes to be addressed and on the specific intent of the meetings is therefore fundamental both for those who guide along the path, in order not to lose sight of the objective and for those who take part, to grasp their finalities, as suggested by Italian partners. Inherently linked to topic scheduling is the issue of timing. Defining a precise timeline for meetings is therefore anyway relevant as it allows participants to be aware of the level of the required time commitment. Sharp scheduling of topics and times is also a form of respect towards the resources made available for free by the subjects and/or the organizations. Clarity and respect then pass through the elaboration of minutes that are necessary to keep track of the discussion, the eventual progresses done and decisions taken. Even more, minutes and notes are essential to give everyone the possibility to be updated, especially if not present in the meeting, and, as in the case of TRIO, to ensure transparency.

- Respect

The above-mentioned issue of respect sits at the core of the management of communication processes. As highlighted by the Austrian partner, creating the conditions so that everyone has the opportunity to express their ideas and points of view is essential both to remain adherent to the aims and methods of the participatory process and to foster the creation of a harmonious environment in which the individual feels welcome, understood and consequently free to expose his/her perspective, ideas, suggestions. The TRIO is therefore charged with guiding and monitoring internal communication, especially in moments of meeting, in order to ensure fairness and balance. It is important to avoid that an individual or an organization ends up catalyzing and centralizing the discussion, by so doing expropriating space for thought and expression.

- Flexibility

Flexibility is a transversal element in managing participatory processes, which therefore embraces its entire practical organization. It should be adopted as a guideline in handling the communication with Local Action Group participants. Its composite structure may require adaptation and the identification of a preferred channel depending on the interlocutor in

addition to standard one utilized for the whole working group. As suggested by the experiences of the pilot sites, communicating via email can be effective in reaching certain subjects, but for others, it may be more useful to adopt phone calls or to resort to other avenues, such as text messages. Moreover, as evidenced by both the French and the Italian experience, organizing ad hoc meetings for a single organization, individual or by type of subjects can be useful and strategic in a double meaning: on the one hand, it allows a more verticalized exchange on the specific interests of the interlocutor, addressing more in-depth the potential role and contribution in the project, underlining the relevance of specific skills, competences, and knowledge within its activities ; on the other hand, such a modality consents to save time, energy and resources of the other members, avoiding meeting of scarce collective interest.

Based on the testimonies and observations made by the partners in the experimentation phase, in order to favor a good functioning of the Local Action Group it is useful to insist on: the *REGULARITY* of the meetings, as a means of developing good communication and for the creation of a tangible and shared sense of the process undertaken; the *CLARITY* with regard to topics, timing, purposes of the meetings and, in general, of the path taken; the *RESPECT* for communication practices, time and resources of participants; finally on the *FLEXIBILITY*, transversal to the organization and management of dynamics with the workgroup.

4. Engagement and commitment of participants

The engagement and the creation of commitment and motivation among the participants represent the backbone of any process that intends to be participatory. These elements do not pertain exclusively to the initial phase of the process but have to be maintained during its development, thus requiring constant attention and resource investment. This paragraph contains the lessons learned from the experience of the pilot sites on the practices and strategies that have made it possible to create and preserve engagement and commitment both in TRIO's members, in particular with reference to the older adult's spokesperson, in stakeholder participating in the Local Action Group and, more generally, with the community involved along the pathway.

“TRIO must show constant adaptation through this process of dialogue (...) involving stakeholders who are diverse in their function and keeping them engaged is not easy. An individual exchange is necessary (...) to understand and assess their possible involvement.”
(FR)

“Understanding the local context is essential to ensure the involvement of institutional organizations, as well as knowing their political and strategical orientation. An organization

can only be part of a collective project such as TAAFE if the project can be part of its projects.” (FR)

“Public authorities are easier to involve in the process if a clear plan about the foreseen work is already formulated (...) if the project contributes to an existing project (...). Directly involving public authorities in the participatory process might be challenging (...) (they) might fear that they will be asked to promise project result they cannot promise to contribute to due to different reasons (...).” (AT)

“Members of the Local Action Group need to see commitment and support from policymakers in the activities, and should not have the perception that they do all the work for which the administration then “gets the glory”.” (IT)

“Find a balance between discussion and action is core. In the same way, emphasizing the results obtained along the process, even if not tangible, is crucial.” (IT)

“It is important to clarify the project aims and to define realistic aims.” (AT)

“(...) clear timeline for goals and interim targets.” (DE)

“(...) it is very important that older people involved develop a sense of belonging to the group and ownership for the project output.” (AU)

“It is important that the TRIO but especially the policymakers recognize and enhance, even publicly, the commitment and the work done by participants, whether single individuals or organizations, especially since they participated for free.” (IT)

- Interest

As the French experience suggests, it is fundamental that the stakeholders involved can, first of all, find their principles and mission within the objectives of the project. Equally important is that the proposed planning is in line with their internal strategies and development directions, especially when referring to structured organizations. A project that leverages participation and co-design such as the one initiated by TAAFE, requires in fact the dedication of considerable time, energy, and resources. Particularly, it is hard for an institution or organization to make employees, expertise, and knowledge available where it does not see an interest or some kind of direct return or investment. Therefore, the action and aims of the project and those of the stakeholders called to be part of it, whether single individuals or organizations, must meet and intertwine. To this end, is it useful to discuss and clarify these aspects from the outset, to ensure continuity of participation over time and an adequate allocation of the necessary means. It is equally useful to clarify the working methods required by a participatory process so that the stakeholders are enabled to organize themselves accordingly. This is extremely relevant in the relationship with public authorities, as the Austrian experience clearly highlights. The agenda and development strategies of policy-makers must find continuity with the project objectives. For this reason, according to the Austrian partner, presenting a very clear action plan, even after an initial need assessment, can be more functional to their engagement.

- Realism

Equally important is to clarify the importance of working towards a realistic and concretely achievable goal(s), that can be small but of great value for the community. Making this aspect evident and reiterating it both at the beginning and during the planning of objectives and actions is useful to avoid the creation of potentially unsatisfactory expectations among stakeholders, especially citizens and organizations, or to face failure, therefore generating frustration, resentment, and lack of interest. This approach is also functional to confer tangibility to the process: a small, concrete, well-defined objective is easier to be achieved. Making participants, who have invested time, energy, and personal resources, able to experience and “touch” the effects of their effort in a not too long-time span create satisfaction and pride. In particular, seeing an objective of value realized, something capable of conveying a benefit to the community, contributes to raising the level of satisfaction and involvement. Making sure to prioritize a limited but important goal for the community is, therefore, a good practice that consents to keep motivation high along the pathway. Such a strategy is also key for maintaining the presence and involvement of the public authority, as underlined by the Austrian team, which will not feel burdened with the responsibility of having to undertake onerous actions -both in terms of financial investment and from the organizational perspective- that it is unable to sustain, with the dangerous risk of creating disappointment in the citizens and local partner organizations.

It is also central from the very beginning to clarify to the working group that the actions carried out will be concentrated on one priority at a time. This is particularly important at the needs assessment stage, when the priority on which the action will focus is not yet defined. Explaining this aspect is essential to avoid that the stakeholders involved, be they individuals or organizations, do not remain dissatisfied in not seeing the priority that is most significant for them carried forward. However, it should be emphasized that this circumstance cannot be entirely avoided and that the identification of a priority may bring with it some drop-outs that can be intended as party physiological to the process. To mitigate this possibility, it is useful to emphasise that the systematisation of a participatory methodology in the construction of services will allow other relevant issues to be worked on at a later stage and that the priorities that emerge will be taken into account for future developments.

- Balance

The relevance of finding an equilibrium point between feasibility and value in defining a priority for action leads to the equally decisive issue of identifying the right balance between theory and practice in all phases of the process, from the need assessment to the planning. As highlighted several times, the participatory process supported by the TAAFE model requires a lot of time to be reserved for exchange and discussion within the working group. The experience of the pilot sites shows how this operating mode, although core, may be difficult for the stakeholders involved to be accepted and clearly understand, especially

when referring to older citizens, who may have the feeling that discussion does not materialize in any concrete actions and results, that time is thus subtracted from them for no particular purpose. This situation can lead to a disintegration of interest over time. It is therefore essential on the one hand to reiterate that in a participatory model the moments dedicated to confrontation coincide with action since they are key to deciding what to do and how to do it; however, it is even more important to be able to intersperse the discussion with activities that restore concreteness. As reported by the Italian partner, the seniors often reiterated the urgency, the need to go beyond words and to do, to decide, to make concrete. An effective strategy to meet this demand, as evidenced by the German experience, is to design a defined and shared timeline and identify small interim goals that help make sense of the larger design and achieve satisfaction. This mode of operation is also instrumental in keeping organizations on board, which are able to see small but tangible results from their strategic and resource investment. Adopting such an approach is also useful for reinforcing the sense of belonging to the work team: seeing the results of the synergies of skills and competencies gradually creates satisfaction and reinforces the sense of belonging.

- Recognition

The experience of the Italian pilot site has shown that, in order to guarantee engagement and commitment -also when looking at future sustainability- the important investment of resources, especially by the senior citizens involved both in the TRIO and in the Local Action Group, must be publicly recognized. This helps to prevent the idea being instilled in citizens, but also in organizations, that participation is a ploy by the public authority or institution to delegate responsibility to the third sector, the community, and the individual citizens, thus profiting from their work. Dedicating symbolic moments to celebrate the results and the protagonists, as widely suggested by the WP1 leader, is a key step.

Recognition also means seeing a concrete commitment of the political and institutional side in actively supporting the actions undertaken and the results achieved. Valorization is therefore not only a symbolic celebration, but also a direct collaboration of the public side in the actions or, at least, in disseminating the results and creating the basis for their sustainability.

Finally, as highlighted by the Austrian partner, recognition has to do with recognizing oneself in the project and its scope, thus developing a sense of belonging and ownership into it. Everything analysed so far is a condition for a sense of belonging and priority to be installed, both towards the project objectives and towards the working team of which individuals and organizations are part. The interlacing of these factors represents the binding force not only to guarantee the continuity of the stakeholders' presence but also to foster teamwork and collaboration towards shared objectives, from their initial theoretical identification to their concrete realisation.

- Trust

Trust is another key aspect for ensuring engagement, commitment, and motivation. However, it is the result of a process that takes shape over time. Although it represents an indispensable ingredient of the participatory method, it is at the same time a result of this method when conducted through transparency, consistency, and reserving attention to the above-mentioned key elements. Trust is also an element configured on multiple levels of which is important to be aware: as trust in the leaders of the action, hence in the TRIO; as mutual trust between the members of the TRIO and the members of the Local Action Group; as trust directed to the working group in itself; and as trust in its own goals and ambitions, resources and capacities.

Key elements in building and sustaining engagement and commitment are : *INTEREST* in the methodology and the goals as pre-conditions; *REALISM* as a form of guarantee to avoid frustration, discontent, and withdrawals and sustain satisfaction; *BALANCE* between theory and practice as a useful guideline to restore a sense of progress and concreteness in the objectives of the work; *RECOGNITION* as a form of symbolic gratification by the institution towards the workgroup but also as an investment that it makes in achieving and sustaining the results; *TRUST* as a result towards which to aim to cement what has been created.

5. The need assessment

The need assessment represents the core passage of the TAAFE participative model. In each pilot site it has brought to the identification of three main domains considered locally relevant and, consequently, to the definition of a cross-sectoral priority to be implemented (for more information on the local management of the need assessment and the identified priorities see D.T2.2.1 Pilot Priority Domains Document). Identifying needs is a very delicate phase as it requires the TRIO to orchestrate the collection of opinions and the stimulation of a shared reflection on the local context, prompting participants to question the age-friendliness of the territory. The collection of multiple points of view and the dialogue between the parties aimed at isolating a common meeting point thus marks an important transition point towards action. It must therefore be taken care of by trying to reconcile the different perspectives of equally diverse players in the area. This paragraph brings together what the partners considered to be key elements for the effective management of this important step in the process.

“In several rounds of different Local Action Group meetings, we asked the need, sensitivities, and wishes of the participants (...) the answers and feedback were collected, sorted and categorized, bundled and finally prioritized.” (DE)

“Elaboration was done orally and in writing. Ideas were prioritized and discussed several times (...) until a unified consensus emerged. Nonetheless, we lost some interested people in the process of implementation, who were interested in different topics.” (AT)

“We asked Local Action Group members to collect opinions on what is/is non AFE locally and some suggestions adopting a basic questionnaire. We then identified three priority domains and ask for new feedback on them, finally coming to the priority. During these passages we keep the Local Action Group and citizens involved updated circulating some pdf files and by phone. It was hard to maintain contact and people updated.” (IT)

“This phase was mainly materialized through the holding of expression groups, which made it possible to highlight the problems encountered in everyday life by the elderly, their constraints, their resources and the solutions that were proposed to them (...) we avoid talking directly about the priority that seemed to emerge from the start of our discussion.” (FR)

- Personal opinion

The experiences of the pilot sites show that the collection of observations, needs, and criticalities is a key element. Free expression, even if guided from above, is fundamental in a participatory process. It makes it possible not only to observe the same theme, in this case the age-friendliness of the territory, from multiple points of view but also to gather suggestions that may be useful in the subsequent planning of a response to the priority thus identified. The methodological indications provided called for the composition of a varied working group and moments of openness to the community of citizens. It is therefore important to take care of this aspect from the earliest stages of the participatory process. As stressed above, it is also a fundamental element in guaranteeing respect for the participants and fostering a listening and reciprocal climate conducive to workgroup harmony and individual engagement.

- Discussion

As reported by the German and French partners, exchange and discussion from these multiple visions are equally important. Adequate space was reserved at each pilot site for a dialogue about the issues that emerged from the opinion gathering and assessment. Reserving a space for debate is important because it allows for connections to be made, bringing seemingly distant perspectives closer together, and capturing links and meeting points. In addition, the debating enables the development of a shared reflection that makes the age-friendliness perspective and its domains more concrete, more focused on the specific living context. Giving substance to the theoretical dimension is a crucial step, since it permits the elaboration of a local meaning of the "age-friendly environment" category, favoring its adaptation and appropriation. In addition, by promoting these mechanisms, the dialogue fosters a progressive diffusion and, hopefully, sedimentation of this theme in the public discourse. Offering opportunities for exchange and consolidation is therefore useful both to achieve the project's objective, namely reaching an agreement on a priority and, in

broader terms, to support awareness on the age-friendly environment perspective at a local level.

- Method and Transparency

As mentioned above, the phase of collecting, comparing, and progressively skimming opinions is extremely complex. Participants may not recognize or agree with what emerges or, at times, may doubt the objectivity of the prioritization process. As suggested by the Austrian, German and Italian experience, albeit with different strategies, it is first and foremost essential to adopt a clear methodology in this identification process, which allows the TRIO and the Local Action Group to act consistently. It is therefore important that its steps are always made clear, that the methods adopted to proceed from the general to the particular are explicit, observable, and verifiable. Informing in an understandable and timely manner about what has been done and leaving a written record is fundamental to guaranteeing the transparency of the path undertaken.

Although this way of proceeding does not guarantee that there will be no withdrawals due, for example, to a lack of interest in the priority emerged from the discussion, it does show the correctness of the process and the working group, strengthening the trust in those who participate.

The key factors of this phase of the process are: *PERSONAL OPINION*, which must be welcomed, listened to, and valued; *DISCUSSION*, as a way to reach a priority, thus satisfying an operational need, but also as a tool to stimulate greater awareness on the issue of age-friendly environments at the community level, as well as a progressive local appraisal of this definition; lastly, making the working *METHOD* explicit as the key to ensuring verifiability and *TRANSPARENCY*.

6. Planning and implementation

Planning is a fundamental moment in the participatory process because it required priority to be addressed with practical solutions. Stakeholders involved in the Local Action Group are invited to make practical proposals based not only on their ideas and interests but also on their skills and resources, putting them into dialogue with those of others. It is thus a delicate and challenging stage, as it demands agreement both on the objectives to be achieved and on the means and strategies for achieving them, guaranteeing their continuity and functioning. To come to a systematic and effective actions implementation it is essential

to achieve an adequate combination of the resources of those involved and their integration into a single, consistent and concrete plan.

(For more information on planning and implementation management in each pilot site see D.T2.3.1 TAAFE Pilot Implementation Plan). This paragraph takes into consideration the practices that have proved useful in order to successfully involve stakeholders in planning the actions then implemented, underlining at the same time obstacles and challenges encountered.

“One of the main challenges is to define an action in which several services and care organizations can recognize themselves.” (FR)

“The formulation of clear aims and of a timeline was very useful and important.” (AT)

“It proved useful to start planning moving from the resources and capacities already existing among participants in the Local Action Group.” (IT)

“At this stage, it should be necessary to do some research for stakeholders who are experts in the defined field of the priority action.” (FR)

“Dive tasks moving from resources and possibilities, enhance the quality of single participants and highlight the potentialities and ongoing result of their synergies.” (IT)

“For the long-term implementation of the main goal, we needed smaller and quickly implementable intermediate goals.” (DE)

“Long pauses (...) are a challenge for the timely implementation.” (AT)

- Interest and recognition

As pointed out by the French partner, not only identifying a shared priority but also structuring an action on which there is general agreement can be complex, especially when the number of actors engaged is significant. It is also essential that the parties involved have a direct interest in the type of action being implemented and/or that it is in line with internal objectives or produces some form of benefit. Otherwise, it will be difficult for them to invest time and resources on an ongoing basis. In the French case, finding a meeting point between the members of the Local Action Group, made up of a rather large number of organizations, was quite hard and led to a reduction in the number of parties actively participating, favoring those able to benefit more directly from the activities finally identified. In this phase, it is therefore essential to ensure that each party feels represented and can gain a role in the actions that mirrors its expertise and competencies.

- Resources

A useful way to proceed in this direction is, first of all, to make a careful assessment of the resources already available in the Local Action Group or potentially attainable through it, as suggested by the Italian partner. Acting in this direction makes it possible to identify results and structure actions that leverage on what is already available, thus enhancing on the one

hand internal competencies and resources and, on the other, making the implementation and achievement of the goals more likely. Moreover, this way of proceeding helps to maintain a realistic approach and, consequently, a realistic way of planning when constructing and carrying out actions. It has already been discussed at length how the identification of plausible objectives is a decisive factor in enhancing the success of the action and the maintenance of motivation. However, as the French case suggests, it cannot be overlooked that it may be necessary to integrate competences which are not present, and to include other organisations with specific competences.

- Organization

As highlighted by the Austrian experience, there must be a clear organization of the actions to be undertaken and the timing of their implementation, avoiding excessively long pauses or latency periods. The organization, as highlighted by the Italian partner, must also include a clear division of roles and the implementation of functional synergies based on the complementarity of skills, knowledge, and practical resources made available by the partners. The organization must also be able to foresee small results in the process of achieving the final goal, as German team suggests. Proceeding by achieving small goals step by step is useful both from an operational point of view, since it can facilitate the management of the process, and for providing feedback to the participants on the effectiveness of their individual and combined efforts.

In the planning and implementation phase, it is therefore important to act on the basis of the *INTEREST and RECOGNITION* of the parties involved in the objectives to be achieved, an essential condition for taking the field; equally important is a careful evaluation of existing *RESOURCES*, a factor that helps to maintain a realistic approach to action, and of those that need to be integrated; finally, the punctual and progressive *ORGANISATION* of actions towards the final objective is essential to act coherently and give feedback to participants.

7. Strategy for maintenance and development

This section contains the partners' indications on what elements can play a strategic role or, on the contrary, act as a brake on the maintenance and local development of the TAAFE participative model. The examination is based on what encourages or inhibits continuity in the working group and what, again, encourages maintenance and continuity in the adoption of a participatory model such as the one that has been tested.

These indications, together with the lessons learned from the implementation of the steps of the model, can support the identification of a strategy by public authorities willing to implement concrete actions aimed at the development of a more age-friendly alpine environment and at giving continuity and consolidation to the results achieved.

“The goal is to provide the Local Action Group with further opportunities for practical implementation and individual involvement.” (DE)

“Motivation arises from intrinsic interest as well as good public relations work and smaller achievable goals. Too much theory and imprecise implementation is not enough in the long term to motivate those involved (...).” (DE)

“The type and methodological approach were rather new and unfamiliar for many (...) exactly this can be an obstacle, as the involvement and participation on this methodological path requires patience and time” (DE)

“The project aims at contributing to projects and strategies concept already in place by providing concrete examples of age-friendly solutions. This way, also the sustainability of the services and projects will be fostered.” (AT)

“(...) a clear and precise orientation of the project seems to make it easier for participants to position themselves in favor of an action than leaving the field of possibilities too broad.” (FR)

“The implementation of generalized digital support for seniors could be a way of setting a precedent for the participatory model of service creation. This participatory methodology could indeed spread to the member organizations of PSP PACA. ” (FR)

“In order to keep all parties involved in a long-range perspective, it is important to have a win-win situation and structured support from the public authority. The members of the Local Action Group have found this convenience in participation and policymakers are willing to give continuity to the TRIO and the participatory method. The positive response from the community has been a catalyst.” (IT)

- Motivation

Motivation can act as a keyword able to encapsulate what appears to be transversally essential to keep the parties involved and guarantee the sustainability of the alliances and the undertaken joint work. Motivation means, for the members of the Local Action Group, implementing concrete actions, the tangibility of which gives an account of the sense and goodness of their activities in the community, thus fostering the willingness to continue working together. Motivation to participate also derives from being able to delineate from the very beginning a clear line of development that allows participants to identify their positioning over time. Motivation, however, is also the result of the advantage that the parties involved derive from what they are doing and from its results. Without such feedback, the workgroup is unlikely to remain intact over the long haul. Motivation can also derive from seeing the positive effects of what has been implemented in terms of both the

synergy between the parties, who benefit mutually from the collaboration, and the effectiveness of what has been done for the community. This can act as a sounding board for participants, especially the institutional one, leading them to maintain their investment to give it continuity over time. Such an element is also diriment in deciding whether to revive the participatory model to meet other challenges, or whether to systemize it to support dialogue and interaction with the territory and its citizens more effectively.

However, it should be pointed out that it is precisely the peculiarities of participatory practices such as the ones proposed by TAAFE, which are often little known to both the public and the citizens, that can restrain motivation since they require openness, time, and patience: they demand a path of reflection and negotiation which at first may not appear convenient to the institutional side and scarcely concrete to the citizens and organizations involved.

- Continuity

Once again, continuity with the actions and lines of development already in place both at institutional level and within a specific organisation emerges as an essential element, which allows to consolidate the collaboration between the parties, as well as the will to support and develop what has been achieved. However, continuity must also be understood as the wish to sustain the method and its results by making them structural, or at least in seeing a shared horizon of meaning within which those involved are able to place their action. This must derive mainly from an intention on the part of the institutional component, oriented towards valuing what has been achieved and systematising the participatory method as a channel for strengthening ties with the community and the territory. Without these types of support, the glue that holds the parties together risks gradually losing its effectiveness.

For what concerns the maintenance and development of results and model, two elements appear as cornerstones: *MOTIVATION*, intended as a factor underlying the multiple declinations of engagement and commitment of the different actors involved: TRIO members, in particular the seniors' spokesperson, Local Action Group members, and policy and decision-makers.; *CONTINUITY*, in the sense of perspective in which each part finds a place and a guarantee of mutual, but overall institutional support, in undertaking new actions and sustaining the started ones.

8. Conclusion

Reasoning in terms of key concepts proves functional to draw conclusions on the concretization of the model in the five pilot sites. Below are the most significant elements that summarise what appears to be transversely important to the whole implementation.

- Time

Time is a variable that influences all phases of the participatory model but seems to have a wider role in the construction of the TRIO, the driving force behind the process, and the Local Action Group, an equally fundamental component in its function as consultancy board and operational group.

- Transparency

Transparency is also indispensable at every stage of action within a participatory model. Not only does it allow participants to be clear about the mechanisms behind the methodology and decision-making processes, but it also helps to build trust in the TRIO and its leadership role.

- Listening

Listening means accepting doubts, criticisms, questions that may arise about the method and the aims of the project. It also means taking equal account of the voices of those taking part, giving them equal space and freedom of expression, ensuring mutual respect.

- Negotiation

Negotiation also underlies all the core moments of the process, from building the TRIO and the Local Action Group to identifying a priority, planning response, and translating it into concreteness. Negotiation takes place between the actors involved, both from the point of view of operational methods, for example in managing communication and information, and in negotiating objectives and actions to achieve them.

- Recognition

Recognition is an essential component. On the one hand, it refers to the recognition and interest of the subject, be it an individual or an organization, to take part in the process as a member of the TRIO or the Local Action Group, calling into question pivotal variables such as engagement and commitment; on the other hand, it raises the question of community recognition and the recognition of the institution, understood as visibility given to the

working group and the results obtained, and as effective and concrete support in actions undertaking and continuity over time.

- Balance

Ensuring a balance between discussion and action helps confer concreteness to the process undertaken. This provides orientation in terms of the "sense of action taken". It also allows a structured path to be shaped towards a final goal, the results of which can be seen as minor goals are achieved. In addition to sustaining engagement, the satisfaction that this strategy helps to create in members also fosters ownership. The reference to balance can also be intended as the importance of identifying a realistic objective, which allows an equilibrium to be maintained between the expectations of the participants and the possibilities and resources offered by the local context, thus avoiding frustration and disappointment.

- Trust

Trust is another cornerstone of the model in its multiple phases. It has to be understood in the double meaning of useful precondition for the initial engagement, and as the result of the participative method itself when carried out through transparency, coherence, and respect.

- Continuity

Continuity concerns both micro-dynamics, as communication strategies and management of operations within the working group, and macro-dynamics, where it must be understood as maintenance and development of the service created and the participatory model initiated.