



Empowering Older Adults for Collective Engagement

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Contributor(s)		
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The **AGEFORCE** Consortium consists of:

Participant #	Participant organisation name	Country
1 Coordinator	Tero PC (Tero)	Greece
2 BEN	Center for Health, Exercise and Sport Sciences (CHESS)	Serbia
3 BEN	Dimos Fylis (FYLI)	Greece
4 BEN	National University "Yuri Kondratyuk Polta V A Polytechnic" (NUPP)	Ukraine
5 BEN	Egas Moniz Cooperativa de Ensino Superior Crl (EGAS MONIZ)	Portugal
6 BEN	European Citizen Science Association (ECSA)	Germany

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Abbreviations

EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
GA	Grant Agreement
PA	Physical activity
REA	European Research Executive Agency
WP	Work Package

Executive summary

This manual serves as a comprehensive, step-by-step guide for all AGEFORCE partners to plan, organise, facilitate, and document co-creative workshops with older adults aged 65 and above. It provides both the conceptual framework underpinning the workshops and the practical instructions that moderators need to deliver engaging, inclusive, and productive sessions across all partner countries.

The workshops are a central component of the AGEFORCE project's participatory citizen science approach. They are designed to place older adults at the heart of the research process, enabling them to share their experiences, express their needs, and actively co-design solutions that promote physical activity in later life. By doing so, the project moves beyond traditional top-down research paradigms toward a genuinely bottom-up model of engagement.



Figure 1: AGEFORCE Logo

1 Introduction

1.1 The AGEFORCE Project

AGEFORCE implements a bottom-up, co-creative model putting citizen scientists at the center of the project, with the goal of generating positive impact on the physical activity levels of older adults. The project builds upon existing citizen science frameworks and programs involving older adults in the design and implementation of physical activities schemes. AGEFORCE will also build the foundations for the development of a Pan-European Citizen Science Hub on Active Ageing, by introducing the concept of the Communities of Interest into its work structure. During the co-creation process, older adults, mediators and other stakeholders will design innovative offline practices (counseling services, training programs, specialised gyms, organised excursions, etc.) and digital interventions (communication platform, virtual Communities of Interest, online booking systems, tele-coaching, etc.) based on older adults' needs and visions. Older adults will also be informed and motivated to develop informal action teams through a full series of informative seminars, so they can stay active through social inclusion.

The aging of the population is a long-term trend which began several decades ago in Europe. The population of the EU on 1 January 2022 was estimated at 446.7 million. Young people (0 to 14 years old) made up 15.0 % of the EU's population (see Table 1), while people considered to be of working age (15 to 64 years old) accounted for 63.9 % of the population. Older people (aged 65 or over) had a 21.1 % share (an increase of 0.3 percentage points (pp) compared with the previous year and an increase of 3.1pp compared with 10 years earlier). To compare, in 2021 the three population groups, young people (0 to 14 years old), working age (15 to 64 years old) and older people (aged 65 and over) represented, respectively, 15.1 %, 64.1 % and 20.8 % of the EU's population. (Eurostat 2023). People worldwide live longer. According to the WHO the proportion of the world's population over 60 years of age will nearly double from 12 to 22% between 2015 and 2050 (WHO Ageing and Health: 2018).

Strong evidence links regular physical activity in older adults to:

- Improved physical function, mobility, and independent living
- Reduced risk of chronic illness (morbidity) and premature death (mortality)
- Better mental health, mood, and overall wellbeing
- Reduced risk of falls and hospitalisations
- Stronger immune function and reduced social isolation

Loneliness compounds these risks: 32% of older EU adults live alone, and 9% of those aged 65+ report feeling lonely most of the time (Eurofound, 2016). Social isolation is independently associated with physical inactivity.

AGEFORCE is an EU-supported initiative designed to increase physical activity among adults aged 65 and over. Rather than imposing top-down interventions, AGEFORCE adopts a bottom-up, citizen science approach — empowering older adults to actively co-design the physical activity programmes that affect their lives. This participatory model is grounded in Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation and the principles of Open Science.

Key features of the AGEFORCE approach include:

- Co-creation: Older adults work alongside project partners to design and implement PA programmes tailored to their real needs and daily routines.
- Accessibility & adaptability: All activities are designed to be inclusive, regardless of individual physical ability or age-related limitations.
- Collective intelligence: Participants share lived experience to improve programme design, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of engagement.
- Communities of Interest: Fostering teamwork and shared participation to combat loneliness and strengthen social bonds.
- Pan-European ambition: AGEFORCE aims to establish a Pan-European Citizen Science Hub on Active Ageing as a long-term legacy.

AGEFORCE aligns with key EU and WHO policy frameworks, including the WHO Strategy and Action Plan for Healthy Ageing in Europe (2012–2020) and the European Scaling-Up Strategy in Active & Healthy Ageing. It directly responds to the EU Council's recognition that physical inactivity rates among older people remain unacceptably high and require targeted, multi-sector interventions.

1.2 Description of WP5

Work Package 5 (WP5) is the dissemination and communications work package for the AGEFORCE project. This work package serves to raise awareness and increase the visibility of AGEFORCE to ensure maximum participation of citizens and the adoption of project outputs. Communication and dissemination activities will be implemented through the management of project social media channels, the development of physical and digital advertising materials, the development and management of project web tools and the organisation of a final event.

Beyond outward communication, WP5 plays a structural role within the project: it designs and manages the citizen engagement process that is central to AGEFORCE's participatory, citizen science approach. This includes establishing and managing the Communities of Interest and developing the digital infrastructure that supports their involvement.

Objectives

- Increase the visibility and public profile of the AGEFORCE project
- Design a coherent brand identity, including logo, visual language and communication materials
- Disseminate the project's results widely across relevant audiences and sectors
- Establish and maintain Communities of Interest
- Design and guide the citizen involvement and co-creation process
- Develop and maintain all web-based tools supporting the project
- Keep social media channels active and regularly updated
- Organise a final project event

Tasks

T5.1 – Dissemination, Communication and Exploitation

This task covers all outreach and dissemination activities throughout the life of the project. It encompasses the development of a brand identity — including the project logo, leaflet, and overall visual identity. Three online newsletters will be produced and distributed to Col members and the general public via the project website. Participation in external events, workshops, and forums is also included.

T5.2 – Communities of Interest (Col)

This task manages the recruitment, engagement, and ongoing participation of older adults as citizen scientists within AGEFORCE. It begins with the development of a Citizen Engagement Plan, which sets out a detailed, principled process for involving older adults in project activities — drawing on the 10 Principles of Citizen Science (Robinson et al., 2018) and the project's own framework for ensuring high participation levels. Regular in-person and online panel meetings are organised by consortium partners to further engage members, deepen their involvement in programme co-design, and motivate them to increase their own levels of physical activity. The Cols are a cornerstone of AGEFORCE's bottom-up, participatory model.

T5.3 – Development of Web Tools

This task is responsible for the design, development, and maintenance of all digital tools used in the project. The project website serves as the primary public-facing presence of AGEFORCE, providing access to results, news, and resources at different permission levels for partners and the general public. A dedicated Col virtual space functions as a collaboration platform where members can post ideas, comment on contributions, rate submissions, and interact with one another. A crowdsourcing platform — integrated into the website — enables registered users to submit ideas, comment on and rate existing submissions, and engage with other participants.

Table 1: Work Package 5 Tasks

Deliverable	Title	Due (month)	Type
D5.1	Communication Material	M12	Report
D5.2	Citizen Panel Manual	M4	Report
D5.3	Citizen Engagement Plan	M3	Report
D5.4	Web Tools	M24	Website / Digital

Table 2: Work package 5 deliverables

2 Citizen Panel Framework

2.1 Overview of the Four-Phase Model

This guide is not an attempt to reinvent the wheel, but rather builds off existing co-creative methodologies adapted for AGEFORCE's needs. Specifically, this guide utilises materials and methodologies from D-NOSES, U4IoT, CIPTEC, Health CASCADE, SSOAR, Oxfam and others. Based on these methodologies, the co-creative workshops are structured around four interconnected phases. Each phase builds on the previous one, creating a progressive journey from understanding to action. While presented sequentially, the process is inherently iterative – insights from later phases may prompt revisiting earlier ones.

Phase	Focus	Duration	Key Output
Phase 1: Co-Analysis	Understanding the current landscape of PA for older adults	45–60 min	Needs map and barrier inventory
Phase 2: Co-Design	Envisioning future PA provision and co-creating solutions	45–60 min	Vision statements and solution concepts
Phase 3: Co-Evaluation	Assessing and prioritising proposed solutions	30–45 min	Prioritised intervention list
Phase 4: Co-Implementation	Planning actionable next steps and commitments	20–30 min	Action roadmap and participant commitments

Table 3: Citizen panel phases

The total workshop duration is approximately 3 to 3.5 hours, including a 15–20 minute break between Phases 2 and 3. This timing has been validated through the pilot experiences of comparable EU projects and is designed to maintain engagement without causing fatigue among older participants.

The Co-Analysis phase establishes a shared understanding of the current situation. It is the diagnostic stage where participants articulate their experiences, identify what works and what does not, and surface the values, motivations, and barriers that shape their relationship with physical activity.

Note on panel methodology

The AGEFORCE workshops are not focus groups or consultations. They are genuine co-creation sessions where older adults are treated as expert partners, not passive informants. The methodology is designed to create a level playing field where lived experience is valued equally with professional expertise.

Figure 2: Note on panel methodology

2.2 Phase 1: Co-Analysis

2.2.1 Objectives

- Map existing physical activity practices and programmes known to participants.
- Identify personal motivations for and barriers to engaging in physical activity.
- Explore the socio-economic and environmental factors that influence participation.
- Create participant personas that capture the diversity of experiences in the room.

2.2.2 Activities

Activity 1 – Personal Journey Mapping (20 minutes): Each participant receives a large-format template (see Appendix 1) divided into three sections: “My Physical Activity Past,” “My Physical Activity Present,” and “My Physical Activity Wishes.” Using coloured stickers, markers, and pre-printed icons, participants map their personal journey. This visual approach, drawn from the U4IoT toolkit, enables participants who may be less comfortable with verbal expression to communicate effectively.

Activity 2 – Value Mapping Exercise (20 minutes): Adapted from the Schwartz value model, this exercise asks participants to identify which values are most important to them in relation to physical activity. A simplified value wheel is provided (see Appendix 3) with categories such as health, community, independence, enjoyment, achievement, and safety. Participants place coloured dots on the values most relevant to them, creating a collective value heat map.

Activity 3 – Barrier and Enabler Wall (15 minutes): Participants write barriers (on red cards) and enablers (on green cards) and place them on a shared wall. The moderator then facilitates a brief clustering discussion to group related items. This collective intelligence approach, inspired by the CIPTEC framework, transforms individual experiences into structured thematic categories.

The Co-Design phase shifts the focus from diagnosis to imagination. Participants are invited to envision what ideal physical activity provision would look like and to propose concrete solutions. This phase is where the creative energy of the group is channelled into actionable ideas.

2.3 Phase 2: Co-Design

2.3.1 Objectives

- Develop a set of “visions” for future physical activity provision.
- Generate ideas for new or improved practices, schemes, and tools.
- Ensure proposed solutions address the barriers and leverage the enablers identified in Phase 1.

2.3.2 Activities

Activity 4 – Vision Building (25 minutes): Working in small groups of 4–6, participants create a “vision poster” describing their ideal physical activity experience. Each group receives a template (see Appendix 2) with prompts: “People my age could benefit from physical activity...” covering

dimensions such as community, health, technology, accessibility, lifestyle, and other. Groups present their visions in a 2-minute summary to the collected participants.

Activity 5 – Solution Café (25 minutes): Using the World Café method, three table stations are set up, each focused on a different solution category: (a) community-based programmes, (b) digital and technology-enabled tools, and (c) environmental and infrastructure improvements. Participants rotate between tables every 8 minutes, building on the ideas left by previous groups. A table host remains at each station to guide the discussion and capture emerging themes.

The Co-Evaluation phase introduces structured assessment criteria to help participants prioritise the ideas generated in Phase 2. This stage ensures that the most promising and feasible solutions are identified for further development.

- Assess proposed solutions against criteria of desirability, feasibility, and impact.
- Identify the top-priority interventions for each partner country.
- Capture participants’ reasoning and preferences to inform later project activities.

2.4 Phase 3: Co-Evaluation

The Co-Evaluation phase introduces structured assessment criteria to help participants prioritise the ideas generated in Phase 2. This stage ensures that the most promising and feasible solutions are identified for further development.

2.4.1 Objectives

- Assess proposed solutions against criteria of desirability, feasibility, and impact.
- Identify the top-priority interventions for each partner country.
- Capture participants’ reasoning and preferences to inform later project activities.

2.4.2 Activities

Activity 6 – Dot Voting and Ranking (15 minutes): All solution ideas from the Co-Design phase are displayed on a wall in the workshop venue. Each participant receives six adhesive dots (two green for “most desirable,” two blue for “most feasible,” and two orange for “greatest potential impact”). Participants place their dots on the solutions they consider strongest in each category. The moderator tallies votes to create a ranked list.

Activity 7 – Empathy Review (15 minutes): Adapted from the AGEFORCE methodology’s empathy analysis approach, this activity asks participants to evaluate the top-ranked solutions from the perspective of different older adult personas (e.g., a highly active retiree, a person with limited mobility, a socially isolated individual, a digitally confident senior). This ensures solutions are tested for inclusivity across the diversity of the target population.

2.5 Phase 4: Co-Implementation

The final phase translates the prioritised solutions into an actionable roadmap. It also reinforces participants' sense of ownership and establishes connections for ongoing engagement through the AGEFORCE Communities of Interest.

2.5.1 Objectives

- Define concrete next steps for the most promising solutions.
- Identify roles and resources needed for implementation.
- Recruit participants for the Communities of Interest.
- Collect final reflections and feedback on the workshop experience.

2.5.2 Activities

Activity 8 – Action Roadmap (15 minutes): For each of the top three prioritised solutions, a small group works on an action card that specifies: what needs to happen, who should be involved, what resources are needed, what the timeline could be, and what success would look like. These cards become key inputs for the project's WP4 design activities.

Activity 9 – Commitment Circle (10 minutes): In a closing circle, each participant is invited to share one personal commitment or action they will take as a result of the workshop. Participants who wish to remain involved are invited to provide their contact details. The moderator explains how their contributions will be used and the next steps in the AGEFORCE project.

3 Workshop Preparation

3.1 Timeline and Planning Milestones

Thorough preparation is the single most important factor in workshop success. The following timeline provides a structured preparation plan that all partners should follow. Pilot partners should adapt times and dates to their local activities, but maintain the sequence and minimum lead times.

Timeframe	Action	Responsible
8 weeks before	Confirm venue and date; begin participant recruitment	Local partner lead
6 weeks before	Finalise moderator team; begin moderator training	Local partner
5 weeks before	Send invitations and information sheets to potential participants	Local partner
4 weeks before	Prepare all workshop materials (templates, cards, posters)	Local partner
3 weeks before	Conduct a dry run of the workshop with the moderator team	Moderator team
2 weeks before	Send reminders; confirm accessibility and catering arrangements	Local partner
1 week before	Final check of all materials, equipment, and logistics	Moderator team
Day before	Set up venue; test equipment; prepare participant packs	Moderator team
Workshop day	Arrive 90 minutes early; final briefing with moderator team	All team
1 week after	Send thank-you notes; complete workshop report	Moderator team
2 weeks after	Submit workshop report and data to project coordinator	Local partner lead

Table 4: Workshop preparation timeframe

3.2 Participant Recruitment

Each partner is expected to organise workshops with a target of 70 older adults per session. The target demographic is adults aged 65 and above in order to gather first hand perspectives on needs and challenges for older adults, though participants can include people falling within the

role of ‘mediator’ as defined by the AGEFORCE project. The recruitment strategy should aim for diversity across the following dimensions:

- **Gender balance:** Aim for a roughly equal representation of men and women.
- **Age range:** Include participants across the spectrum from 65 to 80+.
- **Physical activity levels:** Recruit both active and inactive individuals.
- **Socio-economic background:** Ensure representation from different income levels and educational backgrounds.
- **Geographic diversity:** Include participants from urban, suburban, and rural areas where possible.
- **Health status:** Include individuals with varying degrees of mobility and health conditions, while ensuring the workshop environment can accommodate all safely.

Recruitment activities should begin at a minimum of eight weeks prior to the first citizen panel. Be sure to closely monitor the response rate to your recruitment activities, and increase/adjust the efforts if inadequate numbers of people express interest in participating in the citizen panels. Consider holding multiple sessions as part of each panel in order to accommodate people who are interested but are unable to attend a workshop on a specific time or date. Offer morning, afternoon and evening sessions to accommodate the various schedules and routines of interested individuals.

3.2.1 Recruitment Efforts

Partners should use multiple channels to reach potential participants, as relying on a single channel produces a limited, and potentially biased sample. Recommended channels include:

- Senior citizens’ centres and day-care facilities.
- Local authority social services and welfare offices.
- Sports clubs and fitness centres with senior programmes.
- Community organisations, churches, and cultural associations.
- Health clinics and general practitioners’ offices.
- Local media (newspapers, community radio, social media groups for seniors).
- Word-of-mouth through existing participant networks and community leaders.

For more in-depth guidance on recruiting participants, see D5.3 Citizen Engagement Plan.

Important: Informed Consent

All participants must provide written informed consent before the workshop begins. The consent form must explain: (a) the purpose of the AGEFORCE project and the workshop; (b) how data will be collected, stored, and used; (c) that participation is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time; (d) how anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained; and (e) contact details for questions. Consent forms must be provided in the local language and in accessible formats (large print available on request). Partners must comply with GDPR and local data protection regulations.

Figure 3: Informed consent

3.3 Venue Selection

The choice of venue significantly affects participant comfort, engagement, and the overall quality of outcomes. Select a venue that meets the following criteria:

- **Accessibility:** Ground floor or elevator access; wide doorways and corridors; accessible toilets; adequate parking or proximity to public transport; clear signage.
- **Comfort:** Good natural light; adjustable heating/cooling; comfortable seating (chairs with armrests, not stackable plastic chairs); tables at appropriate height.
- **Size:** Sufficient space for workshop activities and breakout group work. Keep in mind that older adults may be using items such as canes, walkers, wheelchairs or other items to assist their movement, and this may require more space.
- **Familiarity:** Wherever possible, use a venue that participants already know and frequent (e.g., a community centre, library, or senior centre). Familiar environments reduce anxiety and increase the sense of ownership. Participants are more likely to show up to places they spend time at already, due to logistical reasons.
- **Acoustics:** Good acoustics are essential. Avoid venues with high ceilings and hard surfaces that create echo. If possible, ensure digital and audio infrastructure at a venue to accommodate individuals with reduced hearing capacity.
- **Facilities:** Access to a projector or large screen (optional but useful), wall space or boards for displaying materials, and a kitchen or catering area for refreshments.

3.4 Materials and Equipment Checklist

The following table lists possible materials and equipment.

Category	Item	Quantity
Stationery	Coloured marker pens (thick, easy to grip)	5 sets
Stationery	Adhesive dots with easily distinguishable, contrasting colors (red, blue, yellow, green)	6 per participant
Stationery	A5 cards (red and green)	10 per participant

Stationery	A3 poster templates (journey map, vision)	1 per participant / group
Stationery	Name tags / name tents (large font)	1 per participant
Stationery	Pens and notepads	1 per participant
Display	Flip chart paper and easel stands	4–6
Display	Tape for wall displays	4 rolls
Display	Pre-printed workshop agenda poster or digital presentation slide	1
Display	Value wheel poster (A1 size)	1 per group
Technology	Laptop and projector (optional)	1
Participant packs	Information sheet about AGEFORCE	1 per participant
Participant packs	Consent forms	2 per participant
Participant packs	Feedback questionnaire	1 per participant
Catering	Water, tea, coffee, light snacks	As needed
Catering	Lunch or substantial refreshments (for 3+ hour sessions)	As needed

Table 5: Materials list

4 Session moderation

4.1 The Role of the Moderator

The moderator is the linchpin of a successful co-creative workshop. Unlike a traditional presenter or lecturer, the moderator's role is to facilitate rather than direct. The moderator creates the conditions for productive conversation, ensures all voices are heard, manages group dynamics, and keeps the session on track without imposing their own views on the outcomes.

Drawing on the U4IoT handbook's facilitation principles and the PE4Trans experience with citizen panels, the ideal AGEFORCE moderator combines the following qualities:

- **Empathy and patience:** The ability to connect with older adults, respect their pace, and create a warm, non-threatening atmosphere.
- **Active listening:** Genuine attention to what participants say, with the ability to reflect, summarise, and build connections between contributions.
- **Neutrality:** Avoiding leading questions, expressing personal opinions on the topics being discussed, or favouring certain participants over others.
- **Flexibility:** The willingness to adapt the plan in real time based on group energy, emerging themes, or unexpected situations.
- **Cultural sensitivity:** Awareness of and respect for cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic differences among participants.
- **Time management:** The ability to keep activities moving without rushing participants or cutting short important discussions.

4.2 Moderator Team Structure

Each workshop should be staffed by a team of AGEFORCE partners from the relevant pilot area. The workshop team should consist of a minimum of three members with clearly defined roles:

Role	Responsibilities	Number
Lead Moderator	Facilitates plenary sessions; manages overall flow and timing; introduces activities and provides instructions; leads wrap-up discussions	1
Group Facilitators	Support small group activities; encourage quieter participants; take notes during discussions; help with materials	1–2
Logistics Coordinator	Manages materials, equipment, and room setup; handles registration and consent forms; manages refreshments and breaks; operates audio/visual equipment; takes photographs	1

Table 6: Moderation team roles

Language Considerations

If the workshop includes participants who speak different languages or dialects, ensure at least one team member can serve as an interpreter. All written materials (templates, cards, handouts) must be in the local language and use simple, jargon-free language with a minimum font size of 14pt.

Figure 4: Language considerations

4.3 Detailed Session Plan

The following session plan provides a minute-by-minute guide for moderators. Times are indicative and should be adjusted based on group size and dynamics, but the overall structure and sequence should be maintained.

4.3.1 Welcome and Introduction (20 minutes)

Time (min)	Activity	Moderator Actions
0–05	Arrival and registration	Greet each participant personally at the door. Logistics Coordinator manages consent forms and name tags.
05–10	Welcome address	Thank the participants. Briefly introduce yourself and the team. State the purpose of today’s session in plain language.
10–15	Project overview	Provide a short, accessible overview of AGEFORCE: what the project is about, who is involved, why their participation matters, and what will happen with the results.
15–20	Ground rules and ice-breaker	Establish ground rules collaboratively: respect, confidentiality, one voice at a time, no wrong answers. Then do a brief ice-breaker (see Section 4.4).

4.3.2 Phase 1: Co-Analysis

Time (min)	Activity	Moderator Actions
20–40	Activity 1: Personal Journey Mapping	Distribute journey map templates. Explain the three sections with an example. Walk around the room to offer help. After 15 min, invite 3–4 volunteers to share their maps.
40–60	Activity 2: Value Mapping	Display the Value Wheel poster. Explain each value category with everyday examples. Distribute dots and

		ask participants to place them. Photograph the completed wheel and discuss patterns.
60–80	Activity 3: Barrier and Enabler Wall	Distribute red and green cards. Give 5 min for writing. Invite participants to place cards on the wall. Facilitate clustering discussion. Summarise the main themes.

4.3.3 Break

Provide refreshments. Use this time to rearrange the room for small group work if needed. The moderator team should briefly debrief on Phase 1 outcomes and adjust the Phase 2 plan if necessary.

4.3.4 Phase 2: Co-Design

Time (min)	Activity	Moderator Actions
95–120	Activity 4: Vision Building	Divide into groups of 4–6. Distribute vision poster templates. Explain the prompts. Circulate to support groups. After 20 min, each group presents their vision in a 2-minute pitch.
120–145	Activity 5: Solution Café	Set up three table stations. Assign table hosts. Explain the rotation format. Signal rotations at 8-minute intervals. After three rounds, table hosts summarise findings to plenary.

4.3.5 Phase 3: Co-Evaluation

Time (min)	Activity	Moderator Actions
145–160	Activity 6: Dot Voting	Display all solution ideas on the gallery wall. Distribute dots. Explain the three criteria (desirable, feasible, impactful). Allow participants to walk around and vote. Tally results.
160–175	Activity 7: Empathy Review	Present the top 5 ranked solutions. Introduce the persona cards. Ask groups to assess each solution from the perspective of a specific persona. Report back to plenary.

4.3.6 Phase 4: Co-Implementation

Time (min)	Activity	Moderator Actions
175–190	Activity 8: Action Roadmap	Distribute action card templates for the top 3 solutions. Small groups complete the cards. Moderator offers guidance on realistic planning.
190–200	Activity 9: Commitment Circle	Gather in a circle. Invite each participant to share one commitment. Introduce the Community of Interest. Thank everyone warmly.

4.4 Ice-Breaker Activities

Ice-breakers are essential for establishing a relaxed, trusting atmosphere. Choose one of the following options based on group size and cultural context. All have been tested successfully with older adult populations:

Option A: Two Things in Common

Participants pair up with someone they do not know. They have 3 minutes to discover two things they have in common (other than age). Each pair then introduces the other person and shares one commonality with the full group. This builds connections and ensures everyone speaks early in the session.

Option B: Physical Activity Bingo

Each participant receives a bingo card with statements such as “I enjoy walking outdoors,” “I have tried yoga or tai chi,” “I prefer exercising with a group.” Participants move around the room asking others if the statements apply to them. When they find someone who matches, that person signs the relevant square. The first participant to complete a row calls “Bingo!” This activity is energising and immediately introduces the theme of physical activity. Workshop facilitators should be prepared to assist participants with mobility issues, and adjust the activity accordingly.

Option C: Photo Prompt

Place 20–30 photographs on a central table showing diverse physical activity scenes (dancing, gardening, swimming, walking, cycling, group exercises). Ask each participant to choose the photo that best represents their relationship with physical activity and share briefly (30 seconds) why they chose it. This visual approach is particularly effective with participants who are less comfortable with verbal expression.

4.5 Evaluation Questionnaires

A simplified questionnaire is currently under development that combines the key evaluation dimensions-participation, attitudes, and behaviours-while also capturing basic aspects of well-being of participants. The aim is to create a concise, user-friendly tool suitable for older adults, using clear language and a consistent Likert-scale format.

Participants will be asked to complete the same questionnaire on three occasions to enable comparisons over time: (1) before the initiation of the citizen panels, (2) after the completion of the citizen panels and prior to the implementation of the interventions, and (3) after the implementation of the interventions.

5 Working with Older Adults: Specific Considerations

5.1 Communication Principles

Effective communication with older adults requires conscious attention to both content and delivery. The following principles should guide all interactions before, during, and after the workshops:

- **Use plain language:** Avoid academic jargon, technical terms, and acronyms. When introducing concepts like “co-creation” or “citizen science,” explain them in everyday terms.
- **Speak clearly and at a moderate pace:** Do not shout or over-enunciate, but ensure your voice is audible. Use a microphone if the room is large.
- **Use large, high-contrast visual materials:** All printed materials should use a minimum font size of 14pt, preferably 16pt. Use high-contrast colours (dark text on light backgrounds). Avoid elaborate fonts.
- **Repeat key information:** Provide instructions both verbally and in writing. Summarise key points before moving to the next activity.
- **Allow extra time:** Older adults may need more time to process information, formulate responses, and complete activities. Build in buffer time for each activity.
- **Be patient with technology:** If any digital tools are used, provide step-by-step guidance and hands-on support. Never assume digital literacy.

5.2 Accessibility and Inclusion

Ensuring genuine inclusion goes beyond physical accessibility. Partners should consider the following dimensions:

- **Physical accessibility:** As detailed in Section 3.3, ensure the venue is fully accessible. Provide seating options that accommodate different physical needs. Offer assistance with mobility if needed.
- **Sensory accessibility:** Provide hearing loop systems if available. Ensure good lighting. Offer materials in large print. Consider providing a sign language interpreter if participants with hearing impairments are expected.
- **Cognitive accessibility:** Keep activities simple and well-structured. Use visual aids and concrete examples. Avoid abstract or hypothetical scenarios that may be difficult to engage with.
- **Social inclusion:** Be attentive to participants who may feel isolated or intimidated. Pair quieter participants with supportive group members. Ensure that dominant voices do not monopolise discussions.
- **Cultural sensitivity:** Be aware of cultural differences in attitudes toward physical activity, health, ageing, and authority. Avoid assumptions about what older adults can or cannot do.

Practical Inclusion Tip

Provide name tags in large font (minimum 20pt). During group work, ensure tables are arranged so that all participants can see and hear each other. If any participant shows signs of fatigue or discomfort, offer them a break and reassure them that they can participate at their own pace.

Figure 5: Practical inclusion tip

5.3 Ethical Considerations

Working with older adults in a research context raises specific ethical considerations that all partners and moderators must observe:

- **Informed consent:** As detailed in Section 3.2.1, ensure all participants provide written informed consent. For participants with cognitive impairments, consider whether a family member or carer should be involved in the consent process.
- **Right to withdraw:** Emphasise at the beginning and throughout the workshop that participation is entirely voluntary. Participants may leave or stop contributing at any time without explanation or consequences.
- **Confidentiality:** All personal information shared during the workshop must be treated as confidential. Use anonymised data in all reports and publications. Photographs require specific consent. Be sure to comply with GDPR rules.
- **Emotional wellbeing:** Discussions about health, ageing, and social isolation can be emotionally charged. Moderators should be prepared to handle emotional moments with sensitivity and have referral information for local support services available.
- **Feedback and transparency:** Participants should be told how their contributions will be used and should receive a summary of the workshop outcomes. Maintaining this feedback loop is essential for building trust and sustaining engagement.

5.4 Managing Group Dynamics

Every group has its own dynamics. The following guidance helps moderators navigate common situations:

The Dominant Speaker

Some participants may tend to speak at length and frequently. Without silencing them, the moderator can: thank them for their contribution and invite others to share; use round-robin techniques where each person speaks in turn; or redirect with phrases like “That’s a great point. Let’s hear if others have had a similar experience.”

The Quiet Participant

Silence does not necessarily mean disengagement. Some strategies include: making eye contact and gently inviting input (“We’d love to hear your thoughts too, if you’re comfortable sharing”);

using written activities that do not require verbal participation; and pairing quiet participants with a supportive partner during group work.

Disagreement and Conflict

Differing opinions are valuable and should be welcomed. If disagreement becomes heated, the moderator should: acknowledge both viewpoints; remind the group that diverse perspectives are the purpose of the exercise; refocus on the shared goal; and, if necessary, suggest a short break.

Fatigue and Discomfort

If participants show signs of fatigue, the moderator should: offer an unscheduled short break; simplify or shorten remaining activities; ensure water and refreshments are available; and check individually whether anyone needs assistance.

6 Documentation

6.1 Why Documentation Matters

Thorough documentation ensures that the rich insights generated during the workshops are captured accurately and can inform subsequent project activities. Following the U4IoT approach, each AGEFORCE workshop should be followed up with an internal review that serves as both a record of the process and a means to improve up and reproduce future sessions.

6.2 What to Document

Documentation should cover both the process (how the workshop was conducted) and the outcomes (what was produced). The following elements must be captured:

- **Participant profile:** Number of participants, age range, gender balance, and other demographic information (anonymised).
- **Workshop setup:** Venue description, team composition, materials used, and any adaptations made to the standard methodology.
- **Phase 1 outputs:** Journey maps (photographed), value wheel results (tallied), barrier and enabler cards (transcribed and categorised).
- **Phase 2 outputs:** Vision posters (photographed and transcribed), Solution Café outputs (transcribed notes from table hosts).
- **Phase 3 outputs:** Dot voting results (tallied), empathy review notes (transcribed).
- **Phase 4 outputs:** Action roadmap cards (transcribed), commitment circle summary, Community of Interest sign-ups.
- **Observations and reflections:** Moderator team observations on group dynamics, unexpected themes, emotional moments, and any issues encountered.
- **Participant feedback:** Summary of feedback questionnaire results.

6.3 Documentation Tools and Techniques

The following documentation methods should be used in combination:

- **Photography:** Photograph all visual outputs (maps, posters, walls, value wheels). Ensure photos are high resolution and clearly labelled. Obtain photo consent from all participants.
- **Note-taking:** Group facilitators should take structured notes during each activity. Notes should capture both content (what was said) and process (how participants engaged).
- **Feedback questionnaire:** Distribute a feedback questionnaire at the end of the workshop. This captures participant satisfaction, self-assessed learning, and willingness to continue involvement.

7 Local Considerations

7.1 Principles of Adaptation

While the workshop methodology is standardised across all partner countries to ensure comparability of results, local adaptation is both expected and encouraged. The PE4Trans project demonstrated that citizen engagement processes are most effective when tailored to local contexts, while maintaining a common core methodology that enables cross-national comparison.

Partners should adapt the workshops in the following areas while maintaining the four-phase structure, the core activities, and the documentation requirements:

- **Language:** All materials must be translated into the local language. Translation should be reviewed by a native speaker familiar with the target demographic to ensure accessibility.
- **Cultural references:** Examples, photographs, and scenarios used in activities should reflect local cultural contexts. Physical activity practices that are common in one country may be unfamiliar in another.
- **Venue norms:** Adapt venue arrangements to local customs (e.g., refreshment preferences, seating arrangements, timing of breaks).
- **Recruitment strategies:** Use the recruitment channels most effective in your local context, as outlined in Section 3.2.
- **Timing:** Adjust workshop timing to suit local preferences. Sometimes morning sessions may be preferred; in others, afternoon sessions work better. Avoid scheduling conflicts with religious observances, market days, or local holidays.

7.2 Partner-Specific Guidance

Partner	Country	Key Considerations
Tero PC	Greece	Summer heat may require air-conditioned venues. Coordinate with the Municipality of Fyli for joint recruitment.
CHESS	Serbia	Build on existing relationships with senior sports clubs. Consider bilingual materials if participants from minority communities are included.
Municipality of Fyli	Greece	Leverage municipal sports and social service facilities. Use existing senior programmes as a recruitment platform. Strong local government endorsement can boost participation.

NUPP	Ukraine	Ensure venues are safe and accessible. Consider the potential need for psychological support or referral services.
Egas Moniz	Portugal	Strong public health infrastructure provides good recruitment channels. Leverage health education networks for credibility with participants.

8 Evaluation and Feedback

8.1 Quality Standards

All workshops must meet the following quality standards to ensure that the data collected is reliable and the participant experience is positive. These standards are aligned with the AGEFORCE project's quality assurance framework developed under WP1.

- **Minimum participation:** At least 70 participants per workshop.
- **Demographic diversity:** Representation across gender, age, activity level, and socio-economic background.
- **Methodological fidelity:** Adherence to the four-phase structure and core activities as described in this manual.
- **Documentation completeness:** All required documentation elements (Section 6.2) must be captured and submitted.
- **Ethical compliance:** All consent forms completed and stored; GDPR compliance verified.

8.2 Continuous Improvement

After each round of workshops, the consortium will convene a reflection session to discuss lessons learned and identify improvements. These sessions will address questions such as: What worked particularly well? What was challenging? Were any activities too long, too short, or unclear? Did participants engage with all activities equally? Were there any barriers to participation that had not been anticipated? The outcomes of these reflection sessions will help us improve the next citizen panels.

An important tool supporting continuous improvement will be the feedback questionnaire, which participants will be invited to complete following each citizen panel. Indicative questions are presented in Appendix 4.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Journey map



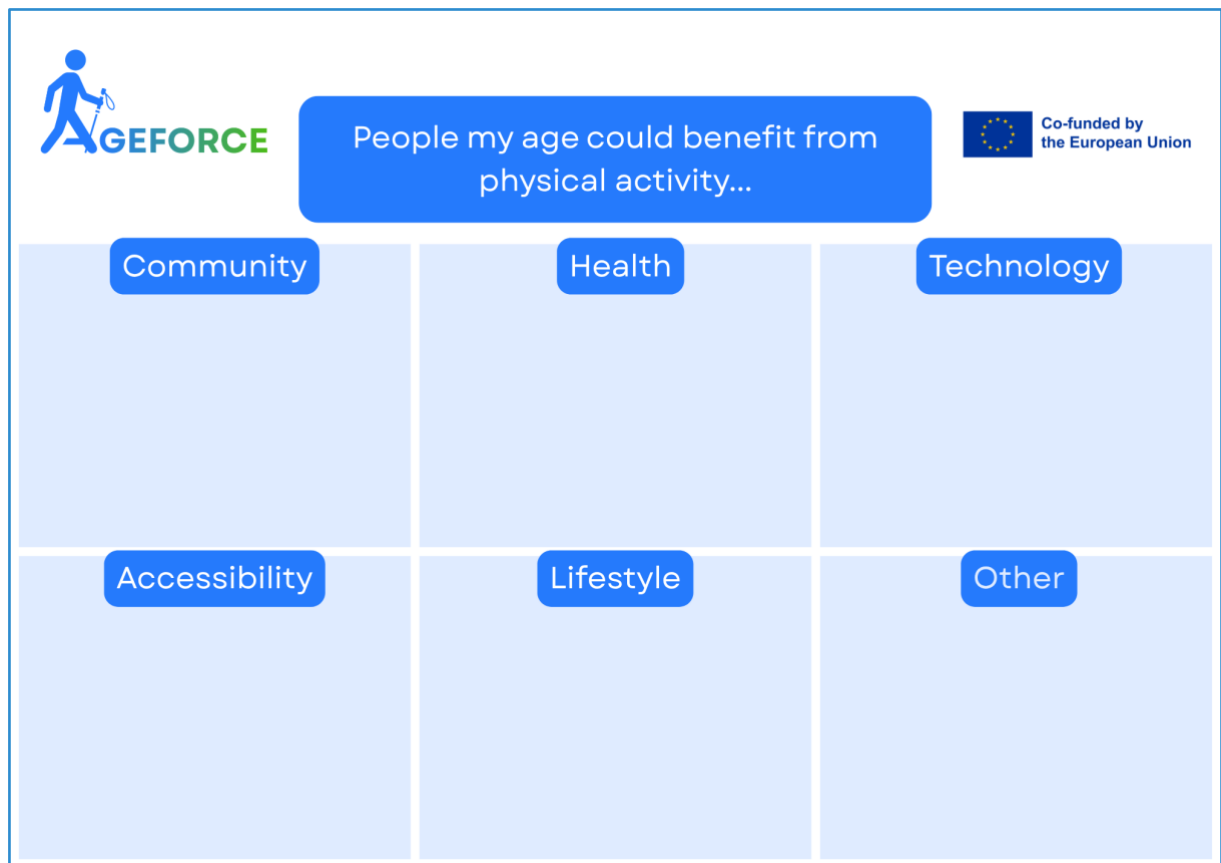
Co-funded by
the European Union

My physical activity
PAST

My physical activity
PRESENT

My physical activity
WISHES

Appendix 2: Vision map



Appendix 3: Value wheel



Appendix 4: Indicative Feedback Questionnaire

Thank you for participating! We value your opinion.

Please rate each statement from **1 to 5**:

1 = Very Poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Average, 4 = Good, 5 = Excellent

1. Overall, how satisfied are you with the event?
2. How interesting did you find the discussions?
3. The facilitators explained things clearly.
4. The structure of the panels and the tools used were easy to understand and follow.
5. I felt encouraged to share my ideas and experiences.
6. The pace of the sessions was appropriate.
7. The overall duration of the event was appropriate.
8. The event motivated me to think about being more physically active.
9. The venue was easy to access.
10. The space was comfortable (seating, lighting, sound, temperature)

Optional Open Questions (short answers)

- What did you like most about the event?
- What could be improved?
- Any other comments?