

Project title	LEGACY - Linking European cities for Generative Ageing, Citizen participation and longevity tourism
Call references	CERV – Network of Cities. Deadline: 16 April 2026 <i>https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/cerv/wp-call/2026/call-fiche_cerv-2026-citizens-town-nt_en.pdf</i>
Context and trends for longevity tourism	<p>International tourism has fully recovered from the pandemic and is on a trajectory of strong global growth. Recent data indicate that international travel has reached approximately 1.52 billion tourists worldwide, confirming a robust rebound in mobility and cross-border movement. Within this renewed global flow, older travellers are among the fastest-growing segments. This expansion is driven by several structural trends, including rising life expectancy, greater mobility after retirement, higher disposable income among older adults, and growing interest in wellness and preventive healthcare. As a result, mature travellers are no longer a marginal group but are becoming a central force shaping tourism demand worldwide. The global market for senior, or “silver,” tourism is already substantial and continues to expand rapidly. In 2024, its estimated value was approximately 128.7 billion US dollars, and projections suggest it could grow to approximately 221.4 billion dollars by 2033, with an average annual growth rate of approximately 6.3%. Other sector estimates are even more optimistic, suggesting that senior tourism could generate up to 520 billion dollars globally by 2030, with growth of roughly 7% per year. These figures clearly confirm that older travellers are becoming a key pillar of the global tourism economy, both in terms of volume and spending power.</p> <p>One of the main drivers of this expansion is wellness tourism, closely linked to the broader concept of longevity tourism. At the global level, wellness tourism was valued at USD 801.6 billion in 2020 and is projected to reach USD 1.59 trillion by 2030, with an average annual growth rate of 7.2%. This sustained growth is fuelled by increasing awareness of preventive health, the search for stress reduction, ageing populations, and a shift toward lifestyle-oriented travel experiences. Wellness tourism strongly overlaps with senior travel, particularly in segments such as spa destinations, thermal regions, retreat-based experiences, and long-stay tourism, all of which appeal to individuals seeking to maintain health and quality of life over time.</p> <p>Europe plays a central role in this landscape, as it is both one of the world’s largest tourism regions and one of the continents with the oldest demographic profile. By 2050, approximately 30% of Europeans are expected to be aged 65 or older. This demographic transformation will have a profound impact on tourism demand. Spending by people aged 55 and over in the European Union alone is projected to reach 369.5 billion euros by 2040, more than doubling compared to 2019 levels. These projections indicate that the silver tourism segment will increasingly dominate the structure of future tourism markets across the continent.</p> <p>In fact, older travellers are already a major component of tourism activity in Europe today. People aged 60-74 account for approximately 23% of all trips and generate approximately 26% of total tourism nights. Additional indicators indicate that nearly half of Europeans aged 65 and over take at least one trip each year, and seniors collectively account for approximately one quarter of all private tourism nights. This means that longevity tourism is not a future scenario, but already a structural element of European tourism flows.</p> <p>Wellness-related travel in Europe is also expanding at a remarkable scale. In 2023, approximately 328 million wellness journeys were recorded across the continent, and this number is projected to grow at an annual rate of approximately 10% through 2028. These journeys are largely motivated by health, relaxation, mental wellbeing, and preventive care, all of which are closely connected to the needs and preferences of ageing populations. The economic dimension of this trend is equally significant. The</p>

European wellness tourism market was valued at about 294.3 billion dollars in 2022 and is expected to grow at an average annual rate of 11.8% until 2030, positioning Europe as one of the global leaders in this segment.

The broader silver economy further reinforces this dynamic. By 2030, people aged 60 and over in Europe are expected to hold more than 5 trillion dollars in annual spending power, representing an increase of approximately 39% in less than a decade. A substantial portion of this spending is directed toward travel, leisure, and wellbeing services, strengthening the economic relevance of longevity-oriented tourism.

In the Mediterranean region, which provides a particularly favourable context for the development of longevity tourism, tourism flows are already massive. Spain, for example, recorded 96.8 million international visitors in 2025, with tourism accounting for approximately 12.6% of national GDP. This scale of activity creates ideal conditions for expanding specialised offers linked to wellness, long stays, and health-related travel. At the broader European level, international tourism spending is projected to reach approximately 838 billion dollars annually, with recent projections suggesting growth of around 11%, confirming strong demand and continued market expansion.

Another closely related segment is health tourism, which is increasingly integrated with rehabilitation travel, preventive care, and thermal tourism. Several countries, including Italy, are experiencing rapid growth in medical tourism, which combines healthcare services, wellness experiences, and hospitality. This integrated model aligns closely with the needs of longevity tourism, where travellers seek not only leisure but also improvements in health and quality of life.

Current data also help identify who dominates longevity tourism today. The most economically relevant group appears to be the 50–60 age segment, which accounts for the largest share of revenue in silver tourism markets. Couples constitute the dominant travel unit, while wellness retreats are the largest sub-sector within senior tourism. Overall, longevity tourism is primarily driven by active retirees and financially stable households that have both the time and resources to invest in travel experiences focused on well-being, health, and personal enrichment.

Longevity tourism can represent a powerful field of collaboration among cities because it sits at the intersection of demographic change, public health, sustainable local development, social inclusion, and service innovation. As populations age across Europe and life expectancy increases, cities are increasingly challenged to adapt their urban environments, economies, and services to the needs of older residents and visitors. In this context, longevity tourism is not only a niche segment of the travel industry but a strategic development model that connects tourism, wellbeing, accessibility, urban planning, and social policies. For this reason, it naturally lends itself to transnational cooperation among cities.

From a policy perspective, longevity tourism is inherently place-based and multi-sectoral. It involves designing age-friendly environments, enhancing health and wellness services, promoting slow and sustainable mobility, and developing cultural and social experiences tailored to older populations. These are areas in which cities face similar challenges and can benefit significantly from exchanging practices, co-developing solutions, and testing innovative models. Collaboration allows cities to jointly explore how to transform demographic ageing into an opportunity for local economic diversification, improved quality of life, and stronger social cohesion.

Longevity tourism also encourages cities to move beyond a traditional tourism-centric approach and adopt a more integrated vision. It connects urban planning (walkability, accessibility, green areas), health and care services (preventive care, rehabilitation,

thermal and wellness infrastructures), and economic development (silver economy, local SMEs, service innovation). This makes it a natural topic for city networks, where the goal is not only to promote tourism flows but to co-design policies and strategies that respond to shared structural trends.

In relation to the City Networks call (deadline 16 April), longevity tourism can be framed as a cross-cutting theme that aligns well with several of the call's core topics and activities. First, it strongly relates to social inclusion and equality. As Europe's population ages, cities must ensure that older people remain active, mobile, and socially connected. Longevity tourism promotes active ageing by encouraging participation in cultural, recreational, and wellness activities, while also supporting inclusive services and accessible infrastructure. Networks of cities can exchange experiences on how to remove barriers for senior travellers, improve accessibility standards, and create age-friendly public spaces that benefit both residents and visitors.

Second, it connects directly to health, wellbeing, and quality of life, which are central concerns in many urban policy agendas. Longevity tourism supports preventive health approaches by integrating wellness, rehabilitation, and healthy lifestyle opportunities into local development strategies. Within a city network, partners could share practices on integrating tourism with local health ecosystems, promoting healthy living environments, and supporting mental wellbeing through cultural and nature-based experiences.

Third, longevity tourism is closely linked to sustainable urban development. Older travellers tend to prefer longer stays, slower mobility, local cultural experiences, and nature-oriented destinations. This aligns well with the transition toward more sustainable and less seasonal tourism models. Through cooperation, cities can jointly develop strategies to reduce the environmental impact of tourism, promote off-season travel, and support local value chains connected to wellness, culture, and gastronomy.

Fourth, the theme fits well with economic resilience and local innovation. The silver economy is one of the fastest-growing economic domains in Europe, and longevity tourism can generate new opportunities for SMEs, social enterprises, and service providers in sectors such as hospitality, healthcare, culture, and personal services. A network of cities can explore new business models, support skills development, and encourage public-private partnerships focused on services for older visitors and residents.

Fifth, longevity tourism has a strong dimension of citizen engagement and participatory policy design. Older people are not only service users but also active contributors to community life. City networks can involve senior communities, associations, and stakeholders in co-designing services and public spaces, which aligns well with the participatory and bottom-up approach encouraged by the call.

In practical terms, a city network focused on longevity tourism could develop activities that are fully consistent with the objectives of the call. These might include mutual learning workshops on age-friendly urban planning, study visits to wellness and thermal destinations, joint pilot actions on accessible tourism services, exchanges on integrating tourism with local health and social care systems, and the development of shared policy recommendations on active ageing and urban wellbeing.

Moreover, longevity tourism can serve as a narrative framework that connects multiple policy fields addressed by the call. It brings together demographic transition, health, sustainability, social inclusion, and local economic development into a single, coherent theme. This makes it particularly suitable for developing a robust, innovative cooperation

	<p>proposal, as it demonstrates how cities can jointly address a long-term structural challenge while also creating new opportunities for growth and quality of life.</p> <p>Ultimately, longevity tourism is not just about attracting older visitors. It is about rethinking cities as places that support healthy, active, and socially connected lives across the lifespan. A network built around this theme can help cities learn from one another, experiment with new approaches, and co-create policies that make urban environments more inclusive, resilient, and well-being-oriented, in full alignment with the spirit and priorities of the City Networks call.</p>
<p>Objectives</p>	<p>The project aims to transform demographic ageing from a perceived challenge into a shared European opportunity by fostering innovative local policies that connect wellbeing, participation, cultural exchange and inclusive economic development. Using longevity tourism to strengthen transnational cooperation among European cities will serve as a driver for promoting active citizenship, social inclusion, intergenerational dialogue, and democratic participation in ageing societies.</p> <p>LEGACY aims to position European cities as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • places where people can age actively and with dignity • environments that support wellbeing and participation • hubs of intergenerational exchange • laboratories of inclusive democracy <p>By linking longevity tourism to civic engagement, the project creates a new narrative: ageing is not only a demographic trend but also a shared European asset capable of strengthening communities, identities, and democratic life.</p>
<p>Estimated budget</p>	<p>400.000 Euro</p>
<p>Main outputs and activities</p>	<p>The project is structured around interconnected Work Packages that collectively build a durable network of cities capable of addressing demographic ageing through shared learning, participatory processes, and inclusive local development strategies.</p> <p>WP1 – Local events represents the backbone of the initiative and ensures the long-term sustainability of cooperation among participating cities. From the outset, the project will establish a transnational governance framework that enables municipalities to collaborate on common challenges, including population ageing, accessibility, social isolation, and wellbeing. This work package will not only guarantee operational coordination but will also serve as the foundation for SO1, by consolidating a stable and forward-looking network of cities committed to integrating longevity into local policies and development strategies. Through regular coordination meetings, joint planning sessions and structured exchanges among partners, the project will create a shared strategic vision that positions ageing as a resource rather than a burden. The main outputs of this phase will include a Transnational Cooperation Charter on Longevity-Friendly Cities, a shared roadmap for long-term collaboration, and a network governance model designed to continue beyond the project lifetime.</p> <p>WP2 – Citizens’ engagement through mobility, encounters and cultural exchange will operationalise SO2 by positioning longevity tourism as a catalyst for active participation. The core of this work package will be the organisation of transnational encounters among senior citizens, designed not as traditional tourism experiences but as participatory civic exchanges. These encounters will include cultural visits, storytelling sessions, local community activities and exchanges focused on memory, identity and shared European heritage. Through</p>

these experiences, older travellers will be recognised as **active European citizens**, capable of contributing to dialogue, transmitting knowledge and reinforcing a sense of belonging. The main outputs will include a series of **cross-border civic mobility events**, a **collection of community narratives and shared memories**, and a **methodological model for participatory senior mobility** that can be replicated in other cities.

WP3 – Mutual learning for inclusive and age-friendly cities will directly contribute to **SO3** by creating structured opportunities for municipalities to co-develop policies and practices that make urban environments more accessible, inclusive and socially connected. The project will organise **thematic workshops, study visits and peer-learning sessions** focused on age-friendly urban design, accessible public spaces, inclusive tourism services and wellbeing-oriented infrastructures. Through this process, cities will exchange experiences on how to adapt their local environments to the needs of ageing populations while improving quality of life for all citizens. The outputs of this work package will include a **Compendium of Good Practices on Age-Friendly Cities**, a **policy learning toolkit on accessible and inclusive tourism**, and a **shared framework for integrating active ageing into urban planning strategies**.

WP4 – Intergenerational dialogue and social cohesion labs will address **SO4** by transforming longevity tourism into a platform for encounters between generations. The project will create **local intergenerational laboratories** where older citizens, young people, schools, cultural organisations and community groups can collaborate on shared initiatives. These activities will include storytelling workshops, heritage transmission projects, co-creation of cultural itineraries and community-based events that celebrate diversity and collective memory. The intention is to strengthen **mutual understanding, solidarity and social cohesion** by enabling different generations to interact in meaningful ways. The main outputs will be a set of **Intergenerational Engagement Models**, a **European Memory Exchange Initiative**, and a **portfolio of local pilot experiences** demonstrating how intergenerational cooperation can strengthen community belonging.

WP5 – Democratic participation and civic empowerment will operationalise **SO5** by creating structured opportunities for older citizens to take part in public debate and local policymaking. This work package will organise **local forums, policy dialogues and participatory workshops** where seniors can express their perspectives on urban development, accessibility, wellbeing and community life. Particular attention will be given to the role of older people as **community mentors, volunteers and knowledge holders**, recognising their potential contribution to local governance processes. The activities will aim to strengthen the connection between citizens and public institutions, reinforcing trust and participation in democratic life. The main outputs will include a **Local Civic Participation Model for Active Ageing**, a series of **policy recommendations co-created with citizens**, and a **toolkit for engaging older populations in local decision-making**.

WP6 – Awareness raising on the value of the silver generation and the silver economy will contribute to **SO6** by shifting public narratives around ageing. The project will implement a communication strategy that highlights older citizens as **active contributors to society, carriers of cultural heritage and drivers of local**

	<p>economic vitality. Through public campaigns, exhibitions, storytelling initiatives and dissemination events, the project will promote a new vision of ageing based on participation, dignity and active citizenship. Particular emphasis will be placed on raising awareness of the social and economic value of the silver generation, including its contribution to tourism, local economies and community life. The outputs will include a European awareness campaign on active ageing, a multimedia storytelling platform, and a policy brief on the silver economy as a driver of inclusive development.</p> <p>WP7 – Inclusive longevity tourism for local resilience and sustainable development will implement SO7 by exploring how tourism linked to wellbeing, health and culture can strengthen local resilience. The project will investigate how longevity-oriented tourism can help cities diversify their economies, reduce seasonal fluctuations and support local small businesses while maintaining a strong focus on inclusion and quality of life. Pilot experiences will be developed to test inclusive cultural routes, slow tourism initiatives and community-based experiences that involve local stakeholders and residents. This work package will demonstrate how longevity tourism can be integrated into broader strategies for sustainable development, social inclusion and local economic vitality. The main outputs will include a Local Resilience Model based on Longevity Tourism, a set of pilot initiatives in partner cities, and a strategic framework linking wellbeing, participation and sustainable tourism.</p>
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