

# SENIORS' WELL-BEING

COLLECTION OF BEST PRACTICES  
FROM RURAL AND MOUNTAINOUS AREAS



**SILVER SMES**  
Interreg Europe



European Union  
European Regional  
Development Fund

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# CONTENTS

Introduction .....	1
Access to basics .....	2
La Exclusiva Logística Social (Spain) .....	3
Courtmacsherry community shop cooperative society limited (Ireland) .....	5
Hasta la cocina (Spain) .....	7
Leisure activities .....	9
The freebird club (Ireland) .....	10
Osteofit (Ireland) .....	12
Community making .....	13
Les talents d'alphonse (France) .....	14
Age Friendly Town programme (Ireland) .....	16
Senior-Senior (France) .....	18
SILVER SMEs partners .....	20

## Best practices locations



# INTRODUCTION

**SILVER SMEs** is a five-year project (2018-2023) funded by the European Union's Interreg Europe programme. SILVER SMEs aims at improving the implementation of Regional Policies for SMEs competitiveness by taking better advantage of opportunities derived from the Silver Economy. By supporting the development of new SMEs from the Silver Economy, an intrinsic objective is to generate services and goods that will contribute to improve the quality of life within an ageing society, in particular in EU rural or mountainous areas.

## WHAT IS THE SILVER ECONOMY?

The Silver Economy offers a wide range of products and services dedicated to older adults, from health to housing, culture and mobility among others. The Silver Economy aims at [improving the quality of life and supporting the autonomy of older adults](#). It accounted for over 78 million of jobs in the EU in 2015 and is a fast-growing market with opportunities to seize for innovation.

## WHY SILVER SMEs?

The [share of older adults is important in most rural and mountainous areas](#), but these territories often lack adapted goods and services. SILVER SMEs can help in [adapting solutions at local level](#) to better answer older adults' needs whether they are healthy, dependent, or fragile.

By supporting the development of the Silver Economy, SILVER SMEs' objective is twofold: [improving the quality of life of older adults](#) and [creating new employment opportunities](#) in rural and mountainous areas.

## WHY A BROCHURE OF BEST PRACTICES?

This thematic brochure on [well-being](#) aims at showcasing the diversity of innovative solutions to [improve the quality of life of older adults](#) in rural and mountainous areas and [how regions can contribute](#) to providing access to basic goods, offering adapted leisure activities, and including seniors in rural community life. These examples were selected as best practices among the 70 good practices available in [SILVER SMEs good practices database](#).



**ACCESS TO BASICS**

## LA EXCLUSIVA LOGÍSTICA SOCIAL (SPAIN)



La Exclusiva is a Spanish SME that aims at improving the quality of life of older adults in rural villages through home delivery services.

### WHY WAS LA EXCLUSIVA CREATED?

In Spain, rural regions are the most ageing territories, with 17% of the rural population being over 65. The [lack of services and transport offers](#) in rural villages is a major [difficulty for older adults to access goods and services](#) in their daily lives. To address this challenge, Victoria Tortosa, a local entrepreneur from the Province of Soria got the idea in 2014 to create an SME which would improve their quality of life by [delivering first necessity products at home](#).

La Exclusiva started its activity by creating [5 distribution routes](#) in the Province of Soria, serving [24 villages](#) where a high demand for home delivery services was identified.

### HOW DOES THE SERVICE WORK?

In this Province of Castilla y León, La Exclusiva delivers basic goods to the seniors' home, including foods, newspapers, electronics and medicines. There are [no additional costs](#) for buying these products for older adults as La Exclusiva negotiates prices directly with shops and supermarkets to [keep the service affordable](#) to all. The delivery at home is also financed by suppliers and therefore free for users.

This service is [user-friendly](#) and adapted to the needs of older adults. Each week, users can list their desired products either on a paper handed to the

deliverer or directly order through La Exclusiva's website, by phone call or by email.

A letter box has also been placed in each village serviced. Every week, a catalogue is distributed there to promote the available products and special offers. Older people can also leave their shopping list in this mailbox.

The service is very **reliable for users**, as a specific software has been designed to centralise all the orders and to rationalise the delivery route. It can register orders up to 48 hours before the delivery day. It is also **reliable for suppliers**, who always receive orders 24 hours before the delivery days, via the same software.



## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

More than **400 older adults** are already benefiting from the delivery service proposed by La Exclusiva. In this rural Province, where some habitations are remote, La Exclusiva managed to reintroduce **social interaction** between people and to improve the quality of life of the ageing population.

Benefits of the delivery service are even going beyond the supply of basic products. 60% of beneficiaries indeed declared they have modified their eating habits, thanks to the wide panel of available products.

The SME also increased the **attractiveness of these villages**. Since the creation of La Exclusiva, one older adult decided to move back to his village after spending one year in a retirement home and other people said they stay in their village because the SME gives them the autonomy to do so. The benefits are also visible for the working population since La Exclusiva has **created jobs in the area** and is now counting 5 employees only in the Province of Soria.

Find more information on: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/2570/la-exclusiva-logistica-social/>



# COURTMACSHERRY COMMUNITY SHOP COOPERATIVE SOCIETY LIMITED (IRELAND)



Courtmacsherry community shop

The community shop of Courtmacsherry revitalised the village while providing essential products to older people, encouraging their integration into the community and supporting local businesses.

## WHY A COMMUNITY SHOP?

The small seaside village of Courtmacsherry is located in a rural west cork, 54km from Cork city, and 6.4km from the next village of Timoleague. Although its population doubles in summer due to tourism, Courtmacsherry has approximately 500 permanent residents and few facilities.

The last remaining convenience shop in Courtmacsherry closed in August 2015 due to the owner retiring. To help combat the **decline in services in their community** and to address the problem of **rural isolation**, in particular for the ageing population, a community shop was proposed. A survey was conducted amongst the residents of the village, with 94% indicating they would support a community shop and many indicating they were willing to volunteer to work in the shop.





## HOW WAS THE COOPERATIVE CREATED?

Second of its kind in Ireland, Courtmacsherry community shop opened in 2016 to serve the community and visitors all year round. The [shop is owned by shareholders](#), who elect a board of management, and is run by local volunteers.

Funds were raised by selling a total value of [€34,000 shares to 274 shareholders](#) including locals, tourists and international shareholders. The shares covered the cost of fitting a suitable rented premise, the community's old post office. The FLAG project provided €9,400 to support the project.



## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

The opening of Courtmacsherry Community Shop provides the community's older people with [essential food and non-food items](#). For healthy older adults, it has also created an [opportunity for volunteering](#) and participating in community life. Approximately 45 retired people volunteer to work in the shop.

The community shop improves the quality of life of local older adults but also [benefits the local economy](#). In addition, the shop supports other local enterprises by promoting [local products](#) on its shelves. The community shop creates both direct and indirect employment. Since it opened and revitalised the village, two public houses reopened, and the hotel now opens at weekends during the winter months.

► Find more information on: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/2479/courtmacsherry-community-shop-co-operative-society-ltd-co-cork-ireland/>

## HASTA LA COCINA (SPAIN)



Hasta la Cocina

Hasta la Cocina is a Spanish SME specialised in the home delivery of homemade meals for rural older adults.

### WHAT IS HASTA LA COCINA?

In the Province of Burgos, some municipalities have no shops or restaurants, which is problematic for older adults, especially dependent ones with reduced mobility. Moreover, healthy diet can be challenging for lonely older people, who sometimes are not used to cook.

Hasta la Cocina is a company proposing [home delivery of meals in small and remote rural areas](#) around Arlanza, in the Province of Burgos. Hasta la Cocina serves homemade meals prepared with [local products](#).

Entrepreneurs got this business idea in 2016 and started operating in 2018. Hasta la Cocina employs 2 permanent staff as well as a part-time worker depending on seasons and demand.

A first economic investment of around 140,000 € was necessary for the development of delivery routes, the purchase of vehicles, the creation of an ordering system and the establishment of contracts with local food suppliers. The SME received financial [support of the Local Action Group](#) of territory (ADECOAR), in the framework of a collaborative agreement with the Society for the Development of the Province of Burgos (SODEBUR).



Hasta la Cocina

## HOW DOES THE SME SUPPORT RURAL OLDER ADULTS?

The company was born with the objective to provide **healthy and local meals to dependent older adults** of the ageing Province of Burgos.

Hasta la Cocina therefore first developed services dedicated only to dependent older adults. The SME then expanded its offer and now proposes special lunches for families and menus for companies. The services of Hasta la Cocina therefore addresses the needs of rural older adults but are also an additional offer for all local people. Moreover, the SME supports regional food producers.

Find more information on: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/3522/hasta-la-cocina/>



# LEISURE ACTIVITIES



## THE FREEBIRD CLUB (IRELAND)



The Freebird Club is an Irish SME proposing tourism experiences for people over 50 who have a common interest in travel and social engagement.

### WHAT IS THE FREEBIRD CLUB?

The founder of the Freebird Club got inspired by his own father, as he saw how he enjoyed the [company of guests of similar age](#), while renting out a country house in Co.Kerry. The idea was born, the Freebird Club was established in 2017 and the business sought to replicate these [social benefits and friendships](#) experienced through the host/guest relationship.

The Freebird Club is a [private club targeting active older adults](#) over 50 who share an interest in travel and social engagement. For a once-off membership fee of € 25, members can access Freebird Club hosts across 40 countries. The host charges a rate per room per night on a bed and breakfast basis based on the market price in the area.

The club has [4,500 members in 80 countries](#) and 150-200 hosts in 40 countries. The business has received several awards: two United Nations world tourism start-up awards (2019), Irish smart ageing innovation award and European social innovation tournament (2017). In order to grow the business in the next 3 years, they plan to hire customer care staff with language skills to support hosts and guests, since the entrepreneurs found that older adults like to know there is someone at the end of a phone.

The Freebird Club has a team of three people, including two full-time employees. The business has two sources of income: once-off membership fees and commission from the stay (from both the guest and host). The Freebird

Club was also financially supported thanks to the various awards they have won.

## HOW DOES THE FREEBIRD CLUB ADDRESS OLDER ADULTS' NEEDS?

The key characteristics of this business of traveling and social engagement specifically for **people over 50** has proved to be successful internationally. The club has **members in many rural areas**, offering possibilities for senior and rural tourism.

The cost of the stay is fixed by the host, generating both income for the host later in life and a medium for meeting new people and enjoying social and **cultural interaction amongst older adults**. Founders of the Freebird Club carried out focus groups before the business was launched to gauge the appetite for this service amongst older adults. Feedback was positive and the focus groups also found that members wanted to pay a fee to ensure those who were members were serious about the club.

Looking for hosts and destinations is naturally done via a computer, but entrepreneurs found that some older adults are not tech savvy. The Freebird Club coped with this digital gap by liaising with active retirement groups and have found **community centres offer access to computers** to older adults.

Find more information on: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/2755/the-freebird-club/>



## OSTEOFIT (IRELAND)



Osteofit

Osteofit is an Irish SME proposing exercise classes for active older adults.

### WHAT IS OSTEOFIT?

One in three women in Ireland over 55 suffer from osteoporosis. Osteofit was created in 2006 to propose [exercise classes for active older adults](#) interested in maintaining and building bone density while improving flexibility and balance.

The instructor can [tailor the class to the needs of the group](#). For example, floor-based exercises for an active group of older adults and chair-based exercises for a dependent or fragile group of older adults. Classes are organised [in various locations](#).

Osteofit is a small company, with only the owner being a full-time worker and part-time instructors hired from time to time.

### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS FOR OLDER ADULTS?

Classes originally started in Limerick city, but the instructor has found there is a [greater demand for classes in rural communities](#), where less is offered for older adults compared to urban areas. This SME therefore provides a new offer adapted to the needs of older adults in rural areas. Not only it provides tailored exercise to older adults, but this is also a [social outlet for rural participants](#).

Osteofit currently has a [waiting list of rural communities](#) wanting the classes to be delivered in their area. The entrepreneur is currently in the process of training fitness instructors in delivering a licensed Osteofit programme in order to [serve more communities](#).

Find more information on: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/2759/osteofit/>



**COMMUNITY MAKING**



## LES TALENTS D'ALPHONSE (FRANCE)



Les Talents d'Alphonse aims at connecting generations by facilitating paid services between younger and older persons.

### WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF LES TALENTS D'ALPHONSE?

Les Talents d'Alphonse is an [online platform](#) created in 2016 to encourage the development of services and experience sharing [activities between generations](#) while at the same time [combatting the social exclusion](#) of older adults.

The platform gathers older adults willing to share their knowledge and experiences, parents willing to offer classes to their children and young persons wishing to learn from others. Through the platform, users can propose their services or search for their desired ones by choosing a type of service and tapping their post code. Different types of services are available on the platform, from sewing and languages private classes to baby-sitting.



This SME was created by two persons and the team now includes ten employees. It benefits from financial support from a wide range of organisations from private foundations, Silver Economy stakeholders and French municipalities.

## WHY IS THE SME BENEFICIAL FOR OLDER ADULTS?

The objective is to **keep older adults active** in their territory by helping others but also to **valorise their knowledges** and life experiences. On the other hand, intergenerational courses or baby-sitting are profitable for teenagers and families, since such services are sometimes hard to find in rural areas.

Les Talents d'Alphonse proposes a single tariff for its services in order to keep the intergenerational services affordable for families while ensuring a fair allowance to older adults.

Since the creation of les Talents d'Alphonse, more than 17,150 hours of classes or baby-sitting have already been accumulated. More **than 1,000 seniors have registered** on the platform to offer their time and knowledge.

▀ Find more information on: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/2536/les-talents-d-alphonse-intergenerational-learning-platform/>

## AGE FRIENDLY TOWN PROGRAMME (IRELAND)



The Age Friendly Town programme connects policy makers and SMEs in successfully providing tailored goods and services to older persons.

### WHAT IS THE AGE FRIENDLY TOWN PROGRAMME?

The [Cork County Age Friendly Town programme](#) is led by Cork County Council and is part of their age friendly strategy 2016-2021. This is part of Ireland's national Age Friendly cities and counties programme, which is included in the global WHO network for age-friendly cities and communities.



This programme was launched in 2017 and aims at [raising awareness on the needs of rural older adults](#) and [supporting businesses](#) in addressing their needs. The Cork County Age Friendly Town programme links regional policymakers with local enterprises in different rural towns over two-year period and ringfences funding for the project.

### HOW DOES THE PROGRAMME LINK COR COUNTY COUNCIL AND RURAL BUSINESSES?

[Four rural towns](#), Bandon, Mitchelstown, Kinsale and Cobh, were chosen as a pilot with plans to expand the number of towns in 2021. Each town is allocated € 5,000 to support age friendly initiatives. In each town, a voluntary [Age Friendly Town committee](#) manages the activities and funding, in consultation with Cork County Council (where the programme is coordinated by a Programme Manager, an administrative support officer and oversight by Director). The voluntary committee and Cork County Council meet every quarter to ensure the success of the project.

The Cork County Age Friendly Town programme supports enterprises through training delivered by Local Enterprise Offices. Age Friendly Ireland has developed a [toolkit for Age Friendly Business Recognition for SMEs](#) who participate in the training. As part of the training, local enterprises are informed about the size and potential of the Silver Economy, accessibility of premises, advised on large font size on menus, to make available reading glasses and chairs with armrests for older persons. Following completion of the training, enterprises sign up to an [Age Friendly Charter](#).

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS FOR RURAL OLDER ADULTS?

Since the launch of the programme in 2017, businesses in each town received training on the Silver Economy and on the needs of the older population. This helped local businesses to tailor the goods and services to the ageing population.

In Bandon for instance, a [local grocer is proposing home delivery](#) of foods for older people. He currently delivers to more than 20 persons per week and sometimes up to 10km away from the town centre of Bandon to seniors living in rural areas. In a family-run pharmacy, owners [proposed more products dedicated to older persons](#), such as canes and wheelchairs. They also replaced the shop's stairs by a ramp to make the pharmacy more accessible and put seats with armrests, to enable older persons to sit and stand up easily.



The programme also financed walkability studies in the towns highlighting issues around accessibility. Therefore, [new equipment](#) was also set up in these towns, such as street benches with armrests, to help older adults sit down and stand up and picnic tables that are wheelchair accessible.

Find more information on: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/2536/les-talents-d-alphonse-intergenerational-learning-platform/>

## SENIOR-SENIOR (FRANCE)



Senior-Senior facilitates the exchange of free of charge services between older adults in Normandy.

### HOW DOES SENIOR-SENIOR WORK?

Senior-Senior is an [online platform and app](#) connecting older adults from the same rural area in the region of Normandy. Older adults can propose or search for a service or an activity directly on the app.

Senior Senior is an [online platform and app](#) connecting older adults from the same area. Older adults can propose or search for a service or an activity directly on the app. Possible activities rank from taking care of pet and practicing sports or a leisure activity to sharing a car to go shopping and giving assistance when using computers and other digital tools.

Senior Senior was designed and deployed by a [startup](#) based in Cabourg. Created in 2018, Senior Senior is [developed together with local municipalities](#) in Normandy and the communication around the platform is adapted in each municipality depending on its needs. The service is made available in a municipality [on the demand of local authorities](#). Senior Senior is therefore an example of [public-private cooperation](#) for the development of the Silver Economy, including in rural areas.

[Municipalities pay a membership fee](#) depending on their size and needs. The use of the app is thus [free of charge for end users](#), as costs are covered by municipalities. The number of users varies depending on cities' sizes and on

the starting date of the project in each territory. In Coutances, a small rural city, more than 150 seniors are using the app.

70 municipalities and County councils already joined Senior Senior. Originally launched in Normandy, Senior Senior is today marketed throughout France, including in cities like Paris and Caen and counties like Rhône.



## HOW DOES THE MODEL BENEFIT RURAL OLDER ADULTS?

The originality of this platform relies in the **solidarity between older adults themselves**. Services are free of charge and not based on the employment of a social caregiver or on a paid service from a neighbour.

By encouraging services between older adults in the same rural areas, Senior Senior offers a **solution to the different challenges related to ageing in rural territories**, such as mobility, social inclusion and digital skills. Moreover, it encourages social interaction and solidarity between seniors living in the same rural villages.

According to a TNS Sofres' study, 69% of people over 50 have a computer and 45% use the Internet at least once a day. For the less experienced older adults, training is offered through **digital literacy workshops** organised within the premises of the town halls during the launch phase of Senior Senior in new municipalities.

The app is also **safe for users**. Users' profiles can indeed be checked by Senior Senior's developers or by municipalities. Some words have been forbidden on the app too, like the word "money" to avoid a misuse of the app.

Find more information on: <http://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/2663/senior-senior-services-between-older-adults/>

# SILVER SMEs PARTNERS



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