



CIVIS Alliance – Open Lab Project Impact Assessment Report

01 – PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Title of the project Tackling the Challenges of Aging – Phase II: Ageing as a Journey

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Universities involved

CIVIS:

Tübingen University (UT, Germany), Stockholm University (SU, Sweden), University of Bucharest (UB, Romania), Université de Lausanne (UNIL, Switzerland), Salzburg University (PLUS, Austria), Université Hassan II de Casablanca (Morocco), Eduardo Mondlane University (Mozambique), University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa)

Associated (local) partners:

Germany: Steinbeis Transfer Center Social and Technological Innovation (LebensPhasenHaus), Luise-Wetzel-Stift (care home), Alzheimer Society of Baden-Württemberg, Bergfriedhof, Sozialforum Tübingen

Sweden: OpenLab Stockholm, City of Stockholm, Karolinska Institute

Romania: Asociația pentru Calitatea Vieții a Persoanei Vârstnice „Acad. Nicolae Cajal” (EN. Association for the Quality of Life of the Elderly “Acad. Nicolae Cajal”), Asociația Institutul pentru Îmbătrânire Activă (EN. Association Institute for Active Aging)

Hub theme Health

Duration of activities Jan – June 2026

Place of the activities

Activities took place locally at each European participating university, while joint meetings were organised in Stockholm (February 19-20, 2026) and at the 1st African-European CIVIS Forum, held in Casablanca, Morocco (March 25, 2026). The international hybrid conference „Ageing as a Journey: Interdisciplinary Perspectives” (June 19, 2026) was organized in Bucharest. Activities outside of the EU were funded on other than CIVIS2 budgets.

02 – PARTNERS/TARGET AUDIENCE

Number of internal and external stakeholders involved in and impacted by the project

INTERNAL (All CIVIS universities)				EXTERNAL (All CIVIS cities/regions)	
Academics	Researchers	Students	Admin personnel	Citizens	Other - please specify
31	10	137	5	176	Landscape Architects (5) Urban Planner (2) Development Officer (1) Cultural Development Officer (1) Communications Officer (1) Needs Assessor (Elderly Care) (2) Analyst (1) Health Promotion Leader (1) Nursing Assistant (1) Group leader, Health Promotion Unit (1) Dementia Strategy Coordinator (1) Safety and Security Coordinator (2)

Non-university associations and organisations that have been involved in the project

ASSOCIATIONS/ORGANISATIONS		
Name	Country	Description
Steinbeis Transfer Center Social and Technological Innovation (LebensPhasenHaus Tübingen)	Germany	A co-creative innovation centre developing and transferring user-centred solutions for healthy ageing and demographic change.
Demenz Support Stuttgart	Germany	A non-profit organisation promoting participation, inclusion and quality of life for people living with dementia through research, education and community-based initiatives.
Luise Wetzel Stift, Tübingen	Germany	A residential care home for older adults providing person-centred care and support.
Alzheimer Society of Baden-Württemberg	Germany	The Alzheimer Society of Baden-Württemberg e.V. Dementia Self-Help was founded in 1994 as a statewide self-help association and is now the central point of contact for dementia-related issues in Baden-Württemberg. The goal of their work is to improve the quality of life for those affected and their families, to raise awareness of their needs, and to establish sustainable care structures throughout the state.
Bergfriedhof, Tübingen	Germany	Cemetery
Sozialforum, Tübingen	Germany	NGO for older people
City of Stockholm Northern Inner City District Administration (Department of Urban Development, Quality Department; Elderly Care Department Communications Unit) Traffic Office (Department of Urban Environment)	Sweden	The project engaged two key municipal departments within the City of Stockholm (municipality), which employs approximately 42,000 people in total. The Northern Inner City District Administration (around 2,500 employees) is responsible for social services, elderly care, support for persons with disabilities, preschools, urban development with a focus on parks and green spaces, and coordination of safety and security initiatives. The Traffic Office (approximately 500 employees) specializes in traffic planning, urban environment, and infrastructure
Association for the Quality of Life of the Elderly "Acad. Nicolae Cajal"	Romania	Social services for the elderly

Association Institute for Active Ageing	Romania	Events dedicated to active ageing
La Maison Solidarité Alzheimer, Casablanca	Morocco	NOG for the support of people with Alzheimer's disease and their care givers

03 – PROJECT IMPACT

Social dimension

The project strengthened collaboration and knowledge exchange across the CIVIS Alliance by bringing together academic, professional and societal perspectives on ageing. The activities connected different disciplines, institutions and national contexts and created opportunities for collaboration and knowledge co-creation.

The Design Thinking process connected academic and societal participants from Stockholm, Tübingen, Lausanne, Bucharest and Salzburg to address locally identified ageing-related challenges. The collaborative, user-centred approach generated four concrete project ideas and strengthened inclusion by integrating the perspectives of older people and their caregivers. The four projects focused on two distinct topics. Teams from Tübingen and Stockholm explored dementia among older adults, while the teams from Lausanne and Bucharest investigated the challenges faced by individuals transitioning from active professional life to retirement.

The exchange at the 1st African–European CIVIS Forum in Casablanca further strengthened scientific community building and links between researchers, practitioners and local stakeholders. The international hybrid conference in Bucharest provided an additional platform for interdisciplinary exchange, with a focus on gender and intersectionality and their relevance to ageing and inequality.

The intergenerational seminar “(Why) Is ageing a problem?” at the University of Tübingen in winter term 2025/26 provided a link between the present project and its predecessor, “Tackling the Challenges of Ageing – Phase I”, combining intergenerational dialogue and service learning through engagement with a care home, a cemetery and an NGO for older people. Participant feedback was very positive, and the seminar is planned to be repeated in summer 2027.

Overall, the project strengthened a transnational and inclusive community around ageing and created concrete foundations for further collaboration and knowledge co-creation.

Cultural dimension

The project enhanced knowledge by connecting cultural, disciplinary, professional and societal perspectives on ageing and by creating opportunities for exchange across national and institutional boundaries.

The Design Thinking process brought academic and societal participants together to address ageing-related challenges. It combined academic expertise with practical and locally situated knowledge and introduced a collaborative, user-centred approach to learning and knowledge creation to develop four concrete project ideas. Throughout the process, a visual facilitator documented the participants' discussions, ideas, and project development journey through a series of visual representations. These illustrations became a valuable communication resource, helping to disseminate the project on social media and supporting researchers in presenting their work and the Design Thinking methodology to wider audiences.

The exchange at the 1st African–European CIVIS Forum in Casablanca connected perspectives from four national contexts: Germany, Morocco, Mozambique and South Africa. The panel linked different academic fields, including sociology, public health, law and critical gerontology, with practical experience in elderly care, broadening the understanding of culturally and socially situated approaches to ageing.

The international hybrid conference in Bucharest provided a further cross-border platform for knowledge exchange, focusing on ageing, gender and intersectionality. Its hybrid format increased accessibility beyond the local setting and enabled wider participation.

A further accessibility and learning effect was achieved by transferring the Design Thinking methodology into university teaching at the University of Lausanne. This extended a project-developed approach beyond the original activities and made it accessible to students.

Finally, the project was also presented during the CIVIS Days in Bucharest in June 2026, as part of the Open Labs roundtable. This provided an opportunity to showcase both the project outcomes and the Design Thinking process, while highlighting the added value of international collaboration in addressing challenges related to ageing. Although participating countries face many similar demographic and societal issues, the exchange of diverse national perspectives, experiences, and approaches can enrich the discussions and contribute to the development of innovative project ideas.

Overall, the project delivered:

- four concrete project ideas within the Design Thinking process;
- one African–European forum panel involving four national contexts;
- one international hybrid conference;
- one documented transfer of methodology into higher education;
- one presentation during the CIVIS Days 2026 in Bucharest.

Together, these outcomes strengthened knowledge exchange across disciplines, sectors and countries and increased the accessibility of project-generated knowledge and methods.

Economic dimension

The project did not generate direct financial revenues or employment. However, it received CIVIS Open Lab funding for the Design Thinking process. This enabled the implementation and documentation of the specialised transnational co-creation methodology and represents a concrete financial contribution to the project.

Beyond this direct funding, the project strengthened cross-institutional networks and knowledge exchange, creating a basis for future joint activities, research collaborations and funding applications within the CIVIS Alliance. Participants also expressed a strong interest in maintaining these newly established connections and exploring future funding opportunities to continue their collaboration.

Added value for the beneficiaries

The project created value for older adults and caregivers, care and social professionals, community and municipal stakeholders, students, academics and researchers.

The main benefits were participation, learning and knowledge transfer. Older adults and caregivers could contribute perspectives and lived experience to the identification of ageing-related challenges and solutions. Students gained knowledge of ageing and hands-on experience with the Design Thinking method. Professionals and local stakeholders benefited from cross-disciplinary and international knowledge exchange. Academics and researchers strengthened their networks and gained access to new perspectives and methodologies.

Overall, the project strengthened the capacity of beneficiaries to address ageing-related challenges in their professional, educational and local contexts.

Relevance to the context

External context: The project addressed ageing as a shared societal challenge while recognising its different local, cultural and institutional contexts. It connected locally identified needs with transnational cooperation across European and African contexts. The Design Thinking process involved academic and societal participants and generated four concrete project ideas addressing locally identified ageing-related challenges. The African–European exchange in Casablanca connected four national contexts, while the international hybrid conference in Bucharest extended the exchange across geographical and institutional boundaries.

Internal context: The project strengthened cooperation between participating CIVIS universities through joint activities, knowledge exchange and methodological transfer. The Design Thinking approach strengthened connections between participating institutions and their local communities. The methodology that is well established at Open Lab Stockholm was further transferred to university teaching at the University of Lausanne, thereby expanding UNIL's repertoire of civic engagement and participatory learning approaches.

Overall, the project connected local societal needs with stronger inter-university cooperation, knowledge transfer and transnational CIVIS collaboration.

Explain how the project has fulfilled the goals and objectives of the European project CIVIS2 (Erasmus+, 2022 - 2026)

The project contributed to the CIVIS2 goals by strengthening transnational cooperation, civic engagement, social inclusion, challenge-based education and the connection between universities and their local and global environments around the shared societal challenge of ageing. It brought together academic, educational and societal perspectives across the CIVIS Alliance and beyond, in line with CIVIS' ambition to share and co-create knowledge across institutions and with civil society.

The project fulfilled the Stream 1 objectives by:

- promoting civic engagement and challenge-based education through the Design Thinking process, which brought academic and societal participants together and generated four concrete project ideas;
- building bridges between academia and local social stakeholders and establishing knowledge co-creation processes;
- strengthening intersectoral and transnational networks, particularly through the African-European exchange in Casablanca involving four national contexts, and through the international hybrid conference in Bucharest;
- facilitating the involvement of local and global partners in addressing a shared societal challenge;
- developing and transferring methods and knowledge, notably through the use of Design Thinking in university teaching and through dissemination within the CIVIS network.

Overall, the project translated the CIVIS2 vision of an open, inclusive and internationally connected civic university into practice by linking local needs with transnational knowledge exchange and collaborative approaches to societal challenges. The project closely reflects the Stream 1 priorities of challenge-based education, civic engagement, intersectoral cooperation, knowledge co-creation and local-to-global collaboration.

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