



**Northern
Periphery
Programme**

2007–2013

Innovatively investing
in Europe's Northern
Periphery for a sustainable
and prosperous future



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Press Release

O4O project selected as finalist for the RegioStars 2012

The Older People for Older People (O4O) project has been selected as a finalist for the RegioStars 2012 Awards in the category *Inclusive Growth: Strategies, initiatives or projects addressing the challenge of demographic change and supporting active ageing*. This year, the European Commission has received a record number of 107 applications.

RegioStars Awards is a competition to select the best among all regional development projects funded by the European Union. The aim of RegioStars, the Award for Innovative Projects, is to identify good practices in regional development and to highlight original and innovative projects that could be attractive and inspiring to other regions.

The O4O project was designed in response to the increasing proportions of older people in Europe; especially peripheral regions such as the Northern Periphery have a higher percentage of older people compared with central urban regions. The difficulties of providing services to older people in remote and rural areas and suggestions within policy that citizens can take a more active role in service design and delivery were the basis for the project idea. O4O sought to test whether communities wanted to develop social enterprises (not-for-profit social businesses) to provide basic services.

O4O was led by the Centre for Rural Health, a collaboration between the University of the Highlands and Islands and the University of Aberdeen in Scotland. Other partners in the project were located in Sweden, Finland, Greenland and Northern Ireland.

The project empowered older people to identify their needs and supported them to develop a variety of social organisations that will provide the services to meet those needs. The innovative aspect is that the people providing the services to older people are older people themselves! The objective is to improve the quality of life for older people, so they can stay and live healthily and happily in their own homes for a longer period.

For example, O4O helped a community group to form and take over the running of a care centre for the elderly in Lochinver, Assynt, Scotland. The O4O Luncheon Club in Cookstown, Northern Ireland, provides an on-site catering facility. Using garden space that an older person can no longer manage to maintain, volunteers grow vegetables for the luncheon club. This turns a liability for one older person into a resource that will benefit many older people who meet with each other at the club. These are just two examples out of a long list of products and services developed by the O4O project.

James Fraser, University of the Highlands and Islands Principal and Vice-Chancellor congratulated the O4O project team, saying: "It is gratifying to receive such distinguished acknowledgment for this important work. The European Commission's RegioStars annual awards highlight the most innovative projects that have been supported by European



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Regional Policy. And it is testament to the tangible difference this O4O project has actually made to the older people in our rural communities in the Northern Periphery Programme area, that it has been shortlisted from over 100 entries.”

Although the project is finished, the services developed by older people in the rural communities involved continue. The experiences and learning established during the project have been captured and presented in the O4O Toolkit - a 'manual' that will enable the start-up of O4O-type services in further communities throughout the Northern Periphery and beyond. Contact information is also available for providers and developers of all different services so expertise knowledge can easily be transferred also after the project lifetime.

The O4O project was part-financed by the European Regional Development Fund through the Northern Periphery Programme 2007-2013.

RegioStars 2012 winners will be announced at an award ceremony during the Regions for Economic Change Conference on 14 June 2012 in Brussels.

For more information about the O4O project, please visit www.o4os.eu.

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