HEALTHY AGEING POLICIES IN UDINE

The older population is growing at a considerably faster rate than that of the world's total population. The number of older persons in Europe has tripled over the last 50 years and will more than triple again over the next 50 years. The older population is itself undergoing a process of demographic ageing: the most rapidly growing age group is that aged 80 and over. The shift in age structure associated with population ageing has a profound impact on a broad range of economic, political and social conditions. Demographic changes are creating a new society: ever fewer young people and young adults, ever more older workers, pensioners and very elderly people. New forms of solidarity must be developed between the generations, based on mutual support and the transfer of skills and experience.

This global trend is a known phenomenon also in Italy and in the city of Udine.

Udine is a small city located in north-eastern Italy in the south of Europe. It has a population of almost 100,000 inhabitants within an area of 56.81 square kilometres.

Elderly in Udine are 24.6% of the total population and the dependency ratio (people aged <15 + >65/people aged between 15 and 65) is 0.54. Trends in natality and mortality rates increase the concern about an older and older future population. That is why we decided to join the Healthy Ageing Sub-network within Phase IV and Phase V of the W.H.O. Healthy Cities European Network and to hardly work in order to improve older persons' health and quality of life as well as their participation and social inclusion in the community. The Healthy Cities Project is a long-term international development initiative, which was launched by the World Health Organisation in 1886 with the goal of promoting comprehensive local strategies for health and sustainable development. It is based on the principles and objectives of the strategy "Health for all in the twenty-first century", according to which emphasis should be given on health promotion and social equity, i.e. a chance for all to live in good health and have equal opportunities of access to various services.

Since 1995, when Udine joined the WHO Healthy Cities Project, it has strongly committed itself to promote favourable environments and healthy lifestyles through networking among local authorities, institutions, organisations and voluntary associations and through the community's active participation and empowerment. One of the main core themes we have focussed on has been Healthy & Active Ageing. Different approaches were combined together through the following actions:

- Collaboration to the drawing-up of the WHO "Guidance for producing local health profiles of older people" and production of the Udine Healthy Ageing Profile;
- Mapping of the distribution of the elderly (using GIS) to be matched with the provision of services;

- Deployment of the Vancouver Protocol (Age Friendly Cities) to record the experiences and needs of older people;
- Implementation of initiatives and projects to promote healthy ageing among older people such as conferences on healthy nutrition, walking groups, physical activity for the elderly, public events, etc.

Finally, in order to promote prevention and healthy lifestyles in the community, the city of Udine has tried to create supportive environments and establish patterns for healthy living through food and mobility policies intended for the elderly.

Plans for the future include new actions to promote not only the physical well-being for older people but also their mental health and maintenance of their cognitive capacities. Moreover, older people's social inclusion should be promoted within the community to tackle marginalisation and isolation.

A project proposal offering them the opportunity to share knowledge and virtual spaces through ICT tools and services, to learn, socialise and be creative, and, at the same time, to play an active role towards their peers and within their community, will represent a challenge for the promotion of older people's health.