#02

Newsletter

July 2013
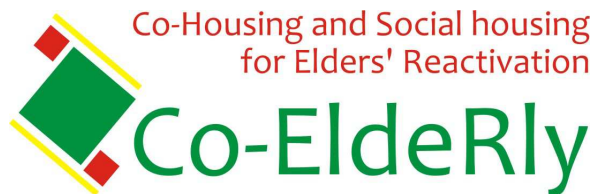
Co-Housing and Social housing for Elders' Reactivation

Co-EldeRly

The Newsletter
2nd Transnational Meeting
6th-7th of June

Amanda Pearson explains the story of Threshold

Co Elderly project working group

The 2nd Co-Elderly transnational meeting were organised between 6th and 7th of July in United Kingdom in Laughton Lodge. The meeting was attended by following partners represented one of the projects countries: **Italy** was represented by Lorenzo Scirocco (coordinator of the project and president of ASIS Consorzio), Palma Silvestri (ASIS Consorzio La Rada), Chiara Casotti (ASIS Coabitare), Giuseppe Tecce (ASIS), **Poland** was represented by Marian Ferenc, Walentyna Wnuk, Magdalena Wnuk-Olenicz and Anna Gabrysiak from Active Senior Foundation, Kollektivhus NU from **Sweden** was represented by Ingeal Blomberg and Dick Urban Vesbro and the host from **United Kingdom** were Melanie Nock and Maria Brenton. At the meeting were also invited 3 women from UK's Older Womens' Cohousing Group (OWCH), a 10 years old virtual cohousing community, and they told the whole story about building the community and their problems in creating cohousing.

Some Partners who came to Laughton Lodge on 5th of July were nicely welcomed in Laughton Lodge Cohousing Community, but the official welcome were held on the next day. It was really nice to meet again people, which we know from the first meeting in Napoli and meet new one, who took active part in the project.

At the first day of our meeting (6th of July) we made a visit to the Threshold Centre in Dorset. We were welcomed by Amanda Pearson and Michael Gillings, inhabitants from the cohousing. They showed us around and told the story of the community.
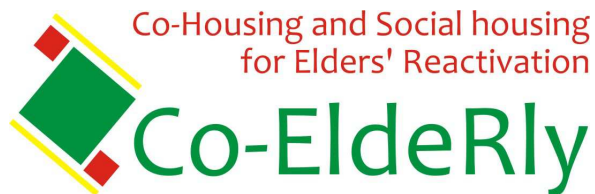
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Preparing a common meal at Laughton

Threshold Centre map

Threshold was started by a small group more than ten years ago. In 2004 it managed to acquire a farm. The group was helped by a social housing company for loans and constructions. 40 per cent of the houses were allocated to people with limited incomes. Ownership and rental tenure is mixed. A substantial part of the constructions was made by the inhabitants themselves. The community consists of a mixture of families, single people and couples. They are accommodated in 14 houses of 1 to 4 bedrooms. Most members work in the public sector, while some have business of their own. Almost all have cars. The community eats together Thursdays and Sundays. Other common activities are singing, barbecues and dancing. The centre comprises guest rooms, a meditation room and a laundry. No private washing machines exist, neither freezers. Threshold runs its own wood pellet power plant and gets additional energy through solar panels. The community also manages hot houses, compost toilets and a poultry. All inhabitants are expected to work four hours a week for the community. There are altogether 12 working groups. Once a year an Open house is organised. Then friends, neighbours and interested people are invited. We asked how new members are recruited. Amanda and Michael replied that interested persons are registered and then invited to special events, at which they can see how the community works. Each applicant is invited several times before a decision is taken to grant membership. What about members who get old and need care? There are no rules saying that members must help others, but it is obvious that psychological support is given. When members get disabled they will probably get reduced working tasks.

Read more at: www.thresholdcentre.org.uk.

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Coffee break at Threshold

In the garden of Threshold

The second day were strictly business. For couple hours we were talking about project logo, reports, next meetings. Kollektivhus NU (P4) from Sweden presented ppt presentation regarding the final Report about collaborative housing experiences for seniors with high dependency in the 4 involved countries and Active Senior Foundation from Poland (P3) presented their ppt presentation regarding the final Report about social policies for high dependency seniors. At the meeting we also agreed on "Business Plan for Collaborative housing for seniors with high dependency" and "Info-training model and related interviews". All Partners also agreed that the next meeting will take place in February 2014 in Sweden and the last one will be in Poland.

During the coffee-breaks and lunch-breaks, we had the opportunity to look around on the Laughton Lodge Cohousing Community and heard their story.

It's started from a small group of people who have jointly purchased a site on the edge of the small village of Laughton in East Sussex. Now, they have 3 large building that have been converted into 16 family houses, 4 new houses, a common building (an old hospital for children with learning disabilities) , 23 acres of land and some other small buildings. The main idea of the community is "to live co-operatively, jointly managing the land and communal facilities, informally sharing skills and support and generally enjoying each other's company"
(www.cohousing.org.uk/community-project, 8.08.2013).
They have common dinners, festivals, events and special groups with different hobbies. Some of them are taking care for animals like: horses, chickens or dogs. It's a typical family cohousing were values like trust, responsibility and commitment are really strong.
    The meeting officially end on the 7th of July.

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