

**RECO – Regions in collaboration to improve
health and quality of life for elderly**



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1 Introduction

RECO (Regions in collaboration to improve health and quality of life for elderly) project was a part of Creator mini-program. RECO was a two year project, started in January 2011 and ended in December 2012. The last conference was held in April 2013 in Lorraine, France. The aim of RECO project was to enhance the health and quality of life among elderly people in order to prevent sicknesses and the need of health care.

The proportion of older people in Europe is increasing and more people are living longer. This is a positive development but it increases costs of elderly care and medical care. This causes pressure on the welfare system. Efforts to improve the quality of life and health of individual also provide economic benefits to different regions that participated in RECO.

The project RECO, Regions in Collaboration, works for the improvement of methods promoting health and quality of life for an ageing population, through development of cooperative methods between municipalities, volunteers, NGO's and universities. In Creator-program Seven European regions join forces to create new opportunities for the needs of ageing population. The topic of RECO project was to exchange good practices for promoting the wellbeing of elderly.

The project had participants from:

1. Umeå Kommun, Västerbotten Region, Sweden (lead partner)
2. HAMK University of Applied Sciences, Research and Development Centre for Wellbeing Häme Region, Finland
3. GIP Formation tout au Long de la Vie, Lorraine Region, France
4. Unione dei Comuni della Valsaviore, Brescia Region, Italy

5. Tkki, Turk Iistan Kepso És Kutato Intezer, North Hungary Region, Hungary
6. Centrum Inicjatyw Senioranych, Wielkopolska Region, Poland

RECO project searched through enhanced cooperation between public authorities, universities and volunteer associations best practices regarding the service to elderly people. The cooperating regions exchanged ideas and experiences through study visits and workshops in every region. (Information about Creator mini-programme 2011)



Picture 1. Elderly home in Poland

2 Häme region

Häme is one of the historical regions in Finland. It is located in southern Finland, close to the largest cities of the country. The region lies only about an hour's drive or train travel from the capital and other cities of the southern Finland. Häme region comprises of small and medium-sized towns and villages and service network between them. The oldest inhabited inland areas in Finland can be found in the Häme region.

The region has long traditions in the fields of textile and glass design. The countryside in the Häme region has remained vital and lively and provides an excellent opportunity to familiarise oneself with the Finnish nature. The nature in Häme is rich and beautiful. The change of seasons can be felt everywhere. The scenery is varied, for the region has forests of various kinds, lakes, marshes and ridges. Lines of ridges dominate the historical landscape that is enlivened by sandy plains and small water systems.

Häme has over 4000 hectares of protected nature reserves. Hämeenlinna is the capital of southern Finland and the country's oldest inland town. The region's surface area is 5700 km². The population of the area is over 168 000. The 16 municipalities of Häme form the following sub-regions: Hämeenlinna, Forssa and Riihimäki. (www.hame.fi) The number of elderly is increasing until 2030, but also the population increase in Hämeenlinna area. (Valk & Nivalainen 2009)

3 Creator mini-program

RECO was part of the CREATOR mini-programme, RECO was made possible by the INTERREG IVC and co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund. www.creator7.eu. Objectives of Creator idea are required to relate to the programme's objective about economic development opportunities related to the ageing societies. A project idea also has to relate to at least one of two sub-objectives:

1. Adaptation and further diversification of the regional level care and well-being sector, focused on human resources.
2. Development of innovative and technology-intensive small and medium-sized enterprises, specific products and services, focused on economic and technical oriented resources.

There is a need for more cost-effective methods that helps the municipalities/public authorities to manage the increased demands on elderly care. One example, which this project focuses on, is the implementation of activities that prevents or prolongs the need for resource demanding elderly care. Most people of old age can manage on their own in their own homes (house or apartment) without any service from the municipality's elderly care. Through this project we will look at methods that facilitate and enhance the ability for elderly people to stay at home under safe conditions as long as possible. Investments in health promotion and disease prevention will help us to improve the quality of life and health of the individual, and also provide economic benefits to our different regions.

Earlier research has identified four corner stones for promoting healthy ageing: healthy eating habits, social interaction and support, meaningful life and feeling to be needed and physical activity. Especially enhanced physical activity is an important tool for good health for elderly and this kind of work requires the need for an extended collaboration between different sectors in society, especially between municipalities and associations, such as sport organizations.

Objectives have been:

- To exchange best practices and develop the methods used in education and in our daily work practice within the elderly care and to improve the range of physical activities for elderly people. Objectives have been to increase knowledge and understanding of how to work with issues as quality of life, the needs of the elderly and so on. We will develop methods and professional training in our work with elderly people as to improve our abilities to take notice of their needs and assets.
- To enhance the collaboration between municipalities/public authorities, volunteers, other associations, and the universities in order to increase and improve the range of activities for the aging population.
- To arrange workshops and study visits for participants in respective region.
- To exchanged and compared training materials and jointly develop our methods.
- To improve dialogue both between the regions but also between the regions.
- To develop methods which help us to take better care of the knowledge and assets in the target group of elderly people. The participants will study and analyze the result out of a perspective of quality of life.
- To increase the number of people with voluntary commissions within the elderly care sector.

4 The goals of RECO project

The goals of RECO project were:

- Actively seek for collaboration in order to create activities in areas such as good nutrition, social interaction, meaningfulness, physical activity and intergenerational transfer of values.
- Promote education and employment within the elderly care sector.
- Contribute to increase the number of people having voluntary commissions within the elderly care sector as a complement to the welfare system.
- The proportion of older people in Europe is increasing and more people are living longer than before. This is a positive development but places a growing demand on the welfare system when the cost of elderly care and medical care increase.
- Efforts to improve the quality of life and health of the individuals also provide economic benefits to our different regions.

The RECO project will through enhanced cooperation between public authorities, universities and volunteer associations find best practices regarding the service to elderly people. The cooperating regions will exchange ideas and experiences through study visits and workshops in every region. This project focus on the exchange of best practice regarding the service to elderly people through an enhanced cooperation between municipalities/public authorities volunteer sector and universities in all regions. (Information about Creator mini-programme 2011)

5 Workshops and conference in the RECO project

During RECO project each of the participating areas organized a workshop. Idea of each workshop was to let visitors to familiarize with the best practices of the area in voluntary work and nursing of the elderly.

The following workshops were implemented:

- Hungary, Miskolc 17.3. – 18.3.2011
- Italy, Brescia 18.5. – 19.5.2011
- Spain, Asturias 25.10. – 27.10.2011
- Sweden, Umeå 29.12.2011 – 2.12.2011
- Poland, Poznan Poznan 27.3. – 30.3.2012
- Poland, Poznan conference 22.5. 2012
- France Nancy, 30.5. – 31.5.2012
- Finland, Hämeenlinna 3.10. – 4.10.2012
- France, Nancy 12. – 13.12.2012
- France, Metz 17.4. – 18.4.2013 conference

The idea of the workshops was to introduce practices of the local partner to the guests. The core content of the workshops was introducing and exchanging of good practices. In each of the works were selected in the conference the best local practices were presented. There were also study visits to nursing homes and voluntary work centers of the elderly.

In the conference there were presentations and meetings about elderly care in Europe and about the best practices in different countries. In the conference meetings the very best practices of all were selected and defined.



Picture 2. Activity center for elderly in Poland

6 RECO project in Häme

RECO Häme promoted well-being of elderly people in Hämeenlinna area in many ways. The steering group had members from Hämeenlinna municipality (2 persons), church (1 person) and an association (1 person). In the project group there were members from many associations, day activity center Olokolo and Tavastian Vocational College. We also had a multiprofessional project group in HAMK University of Applied sciences.

RECO project searched for the best practices for promoting well-being of the elderly. The project described four practices which were put into use by HAMK well-being unit. These practices improved well-being and health of the elderly but also promoted voluntary work and improved co-operation of the participants.

The project also transited four of the best practices from the other partners. These were experimented in Hämeenlinna taking into account regional and cultural differences. The experiments were successful, it seems that they will be put into use as permanent working practices.

In RECO project the best practices were chosen by certain criteria. The chosen practices must fulfill goals of RECO project, there must be students of HAMK as actors, they are part of development of nursing education and they promote well-being of the elderly.

This also must contain methods and themes which are needed in Hämeenlinna area. The practices were not transited as such, but they have been adjusted to learning process of students in HAMK. The transited practices were part of preventive and rehabilitating nursing for the elderly. This helps to support good and independent life at home.

The target group in this project was:

- The elderly at home
- The associations and volunteers
- The elderly care staff
- Nursing students
- The teachers and students in universities
- The families and friends of the elderly

7 Presentation of the best practices in Häme

The best practices in region Häme are focused to professional education. The interest of HAMK (University of Applied Sciences) is focused to educational objectives and practices. One important goal of education is student's motivation to work with elderly and to make careers in elderly care more interesting for the students. In the same time we wanted to promote health of elderly in Häme.

The best practices in the RECO Häme were:

1. Home care-living lab learning environment in elderly home care
2. Home visits to elderly – the developing of integrative pedagogy in nursing studies
3. Co-operation between day activity centers and HAMK
4. Theme day of voluntary work and local organizations

7.1 Home care-living lab learning environment in elderly home care

Home visits in Hämeenlinna have improved co-operation between home care of the area and HAMK nursing education program. The aim is to provide the students possibilities to learn encountering of senior citizens in authentic learning environment. In real customer environment, the customer's home, the student meets elderlies' reality, the related issues and their solutions. Nursing students have participated activities from the outset.

The aim is that operation in elderlies' home in co-operation with home care strengthens student's knowledge in elderly care. Studying in authentic learning environment improves comprehensive professional development of knowledge, skills and attitudes. An agreement has been

made between Hämeenlinna municipality nursing and caring of elderly citizens and HAMK development and research center of well-being nursing program. The agreement defines the co-operation as well as research, development and innovation activities related to the studies. The goal of the co-operation is to develop services targeted to the elderly at regional level with support of international co-operation.

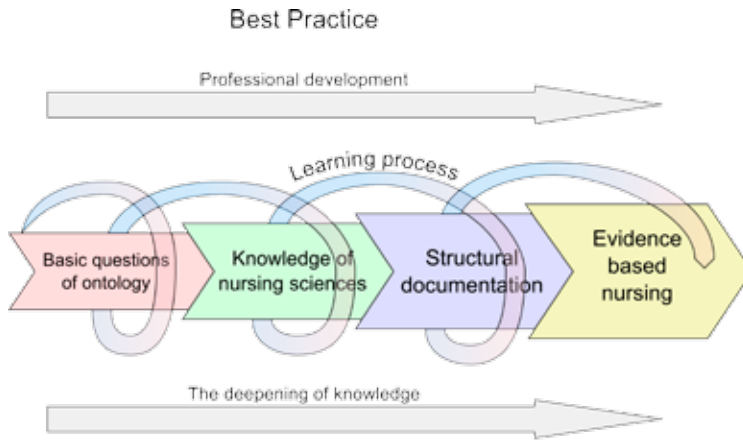


Figure 1. Deepening of student's knowledge in RECO project work. (Vanhanen M. & Sanerma P. 2011.)

Deepening of the theoretical framework as function of progress of studies in the project, is described in figure 1. In this figure have presented the deepening of the student's knowledge in RECO project in home care open learning environment. The students have participated home visits in the start of their studies. Then the process have proceeded for example to home care and student's common research club activities. The student's professional know-how and professional growing will deepen in this process.

7.2 Home Visits to elderly – the developing of integrative pedagogy in nursing studies

The challenge of the education is to arouse interest about elderly care. Training gives theoretical basics for nursing. In RECO project goal was to develop the solutions for the students to learn theoretical basics of nursing and in the same time being in interaction with elderly in the real caring environment at home. In the same time they reflect their experiences. In the same time we wanted to promote elderlies health and well-being.

These studies were integrated into courses of nursing basics. The studies took place under guidance of teachers, so that every second week a pair of

students has make home visits to their own client. During the week after the visit reflection of the visit is carried out in a meeting at the university. Each client has made 7 home visits. The work would proceed in accordance with the objectives of the courses and would begin in September 2011.

Customers were sought to co-operation from home care clients and by using a newspaper announcement. Co-operation was started with 22 elderly. Co-operation was defined with a written agreement between HAMK and each client. The clients and their families were given an information bulletin. A teacher made home visits to some clients before the students started making home visits.

During academic year 2011–2012 each pair of students made altogether 11 home visits. As there were 30 pairs of students, total number of home visits was 330. During autumn term 2011 the studies were culminated into a literal task, which was included in theoretical framework of nursing basics.

In academic year 2012–2013 there were more first year students, about 90 persons. Also the geographical area has spread to two other areas in Hämeenlinna. There are 44 elderly persons acting as customers. Some of them have been customers also during the previous year and wanted to continue co-operation with the students. During autumn term 2012 for each pair of students average number of home visits was six, so total number of home visits was 264. During spring term 2013 there were five visits per pair, which produced altogether 220 home visits. Large number of home visits has helped significantly to improve well-being of the elderly in these areas.

In practice the actions made during the home visits were walking outside, discussing, reading, learning computer usage, baking, arranging photographs etc. The week after a visit the students had a reflection session where home visit and related matters were dealt with. They also have theoretical assignments for reflection of the home visits. They have studied theory about knowledge base of nursing science; concept of metaparadigm, concepts, models and theories in nursing science. It is very important to start conceptual thinking and try to understand the evidence base of nursing in the beginning of the nursing studies (figure 2).

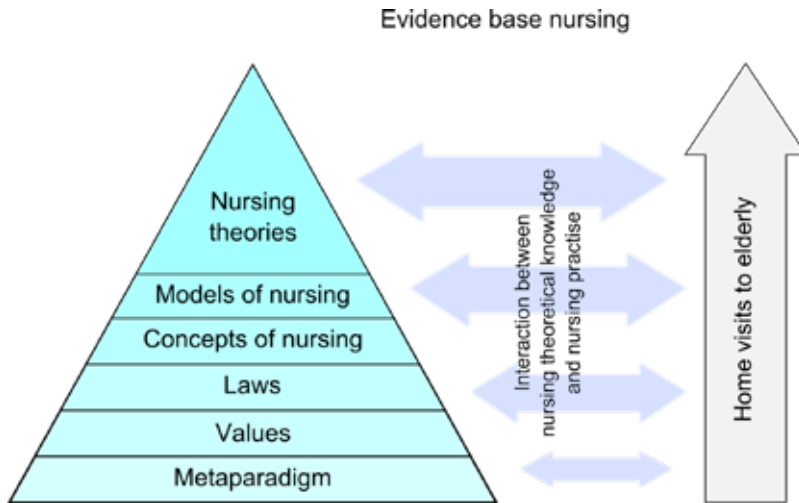


Figure 2. Interaction between nursing theoretical knowledge and nursing practice

The pedagogical goal of this method is to wipe out the gap between theory and practice in nursing. In addition to this, students utilize scientific journal articles and other theoretical knowledge in search for information associated to overall situation of their client.

7.3 Co-operation between day activity centers and HAMK

Activities organized by students in day activity center Olokolo have been one important part of RECO. Improving co-operation between different actors in elderly care sector has been one goal in RECO project. As part of Myllymäki-project, RECO project has operated in Sisälähetysäätiö-owned day activity center named Olokolo. Students (nursing, public health nursing, social work) have participated once a week in refresh session of Olokolo Day Center during years 2011–2012. Olokolo also acquired a computer for recreation. The theme of the sessions was "new kinds of everyday coping skills" but the students have had the freedom to plan sessions as whole entities, taking into account work of the previous groups of students. Customers have been able to read theme of next week in a local newspaper.

Normally each student group has organized four consecutive sessions. Verbal feedback from the customers, students and Olokolo personnel has been positive. Myllymäki area senior citizens have actively participated in



Picture 3. Elderly home in Umeå, Sweden

the events. Normally there have been 5 to 25 people present in the events. The most popular event was Christmas carol session in December.

From customer viewpoint target of the sessions has been to provide recreation and new perspectives to everyday life. The sessions have provided a framework for natural encountering of students and elderly in environment, which already is a popular meeting place for the elderly. From customer viewpoint the sessions have also supported networking of the inhabitants of the area. Using a computer in the sessions has given the elderly new perspective for versatile utilization of technology. Many services, for example banking services which elderly have to use, are in the internet. This situation has increased interest in using internet. The elderly are interested also in photo processing and food recipes that can be found in internet.

The sessions have made it possible for the students to encounter elderly in their natural environment. The students have had opportunity to plan an entity in which various aspects of health promotion have emerged. These studies have been part of studies in health and welfare promotion. The students wrote a common report about experiences with elderly.

7.4 Theme Day of Voluntary Work and Organizations

Theme day of voluntary work and organizations is traditionally carried out annually in co-operation of HAMK first year students and local health care organizations and voluntary work. During planning of theme year “Year of Voluntary Work” it was decided that the theme of the day is “From voluntary work to a Professional” which emphasizes the diverse work made by voluntary organizations. The theme day has always been very popular among students.

HAMK tries to activate and motivate the students to make voluntary work. In RECO project voluntary work center named Pysäkki and associations of social and health care have actively thought in co-operation how to implement this. Before the voluntary work day an employee of Pysäkki and an employee of an association have met the students. They have told the students about many possibilities provided by the associations and voluntary work. During 2012 there was a questionnaire made to the students, there were 98 replies. About 50 % of the students were interested to make voluntary work during their career, but not during the studies. About 30 % of the students have done voluntary work before the studies. During 2013 the results were similar. After the voluntary work day the students were given a feedback questionnaire. The speakers who have own experience of the disabilities etc. got especially positive feedback. Afterwards the coordinator of the associations sent a message to all the students where she asked the students to do voluntary work. We have developed this activating process during RECO project, and we will continue the process annually with the first year students.

8 The transition of the best practices



Picture 4. Asturias, Spain

In RECO project three of the best practices from other partners have been utilized in Hämeenlinna. The goal of transferring the best practices is to copy the good ideas but taking into account the cultural differences between different areas.

8.1 Preventive home visits from Sweden

In Sweden there are regular preventive home visits for senior citizens. These visits are made by a nurse. The home visits aim to make it possible for elderly to live at home. There is an in-depth questionnaire form for collecting physical, psychical and social information about the customer. If necessary a nurse can meet an elder on six month intervals.

In Hämeenlinna normally there is a preventive home visit for 75-year old citizens if necessary. In Finland number of elderly people who want to live at home is increasing in the future. We have to educate nurses and public health nurses who will have qualifications for doing preventive work for the elderly.

In HAMK the questionnaire form was translated to finish. The translated form was sent to Umeå in Sweden to put it into use with their finnish-speaking citizens. In Hämeenlinna third-year students started to implement preventive home visits for Hämeenlinna citizens born in 1937. An employee of Hämeenlinna municipality has chosen the customers, called to them and asked permission for the home visit. Home visit is made by a pair of students utilizing the questionnaire. During the home visit the students interview the senior citizen, make observations of the environment, measure blood-pressure, weight, measure circuit and determine the weight index BMI. Finally, every customer has been given basic information about elderly services in Hämeenlinna. During academic year 2012–2013 total number was 32 home visits. The clients have been pleased with the home visits.

8.2 Story-telling method from Sweden

Swedish RECO partner has described story-telling as one of their best practices. The goal of the story-telling is to activate the old person to look back at his/hers own life. This is important for him/her to form big picture of his/hers life. It is important for elderly to remember and tell their own life stories to other people. Story-telling can be a good way to maintain activity. Swedish colleagues have very informative video in YouTube by storyteller Britta Hansson (story-telling in the elderly care). The video shows examples and positive effects of storytelling.

In Hämeenlinna nursing and public health nursing students have utilized story-telling in several ways, taking into account cultural differences between countries. For example, the students have organized sessions where they have tried to activate senior citizens to remember their life. In these sessions the students have utilized for example TTAB-method, which was trained to them by an expert from Olokolo.

8.3 Computer education from Hungary

RECO project in Hungary has educated computer usage and english language to senior citizens. The education has been done in training center named Erak. In Hämeenlinna the computer training to the elderly is implemented in co-operation of HAMK public health nursing, HAMK engineering and Hämeenlinna municipality. The training contains total 10

hours of training divided into 5 sessions. The course was very popular. The need for this kind of training is serious. Many elderly were interested in training and wanted to participate and get more information about internet and use of the computer. Elderly appreciated personal guidance for using a computer. They told a lot about their needs for using computer when they signed in to for the course. Elderly need training in computer skills because so many services are in internet, for example bank services and health care services. The course participants were interested in also shopping in the internet. They wanted to have practice in buying budget flight tickets and other things.

The students helped elderly in the course for example using mouse because it was very difficult for many old persons. In the course there were also persons who had new portable computer and very good qualifications of information technology.

The student's multiprofessional cooperation was very successful. They feel that they got more understanding about elderlies' needs and it helped them to understand health promotion and preventive work.

8.4 Activity day from Poland

In Poland activity day of the elderly is a relatively large scale exhibition. There are many companies and organizations acting as exhibitors. There are different types of activities for the elderly. For example in Poland singing and different shows are popular entertainment among the elderly. The exhibition is organized annually by volunteers.

In Hämeenlinna the activity day was implemented as a small scale exhibition. It was organized in co-operation of Creator-projects. There were some exhibitors and presentations targeted for the elderly. Public health nursing students of HAMK participated the activity day as visitors. Also in the parts of Häme region same type of activity has been developed. In Riihimäki, which is a town in Häme, a single day event has turned to be a tradition and during the recent years there have been about 500 elderly as guests. An exhibition aimed to elderly citizens is a practice which should be developed further. It is very efficient way to spread lots of information which interest the elderly.

The nursing students have participated exhibitions in different roles. The events have been interesting learning experiments and they have given information to the elderly about products and services that are targeted to the elderly people.

9 Conclusion

In RECO project many important things for the elderly were developed. These were the main results in RECO-Häme:

- Best practices and their further development
- Make voluntary work more visible and activate students to make voluntary work.
- The new international co-operation relationships relate to elderly care
- New educational models related to education of elderly care.

Co-operation with other projects: RECO project was one part of Creator program and the other projects were important partners. Between the projects there were collaboration in sharing information, collection a research data and to organizing of an activity day for elderly.

During the project many kind on best practices related to promoting wellbeing and health of the elderly were highlighted. Many other important and interesting practices were presented in the project but they are not described in this report.

The project developed and produced new kind of know-how and new kinds of education environments for learning elderly care. The development was made in collaboration with local organizations.

The meaning of international collaboration in exchange of best practices was valuable ja important. New approaches were tried out and applied in different countries. Also international co-operation was created between universities.



Picture 5. Stanislaw plats in Nancy, France

In Häme region development of voluntary work as part of promotion of elderly well-being and service system became more visible.

Arter RECO project:

The good practises that were created or strengthened during RECO project are still alive in Häme region.

Every year the students are making increasing number of home visits to the elderly. Home visits are made in larger area. Co-operation with home care of the municipality has become more diverse. Many senior citizens have

been involved with the activities for several years. Evidence based home care of the elderly is under active development.

Preventive activities in caring of the elderly has been strengthened in many ways.

Co-operation with Nancy has been improved. In the future the target is to expand student and teacher exchange to project and development activities for improving well-being of the elderly.

10 Local partners of collaboration

Hämeenlinnan kaupunki, koti- ja vanhuspalvelut

Sisälähetysäätiö, Olokolo

Myllymäen omakotiyhdistys

Koulutuskeskus Tavastia

HAMK, tietojenkäsittelyn koulutusohjelma

Hämeenlinnan seurakunta, Vapaaehtoistyönkeskus Pysäkki

Hämeenlinnan kaupunki: Voutilakeskus, Keinusaari

Kehittämiskeskus Häme

Innopark

Hämeen setlementti

Several local associations



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