



**MAKE YOUR
EUROPEAN
YEAR**

WHAT IS THE EUROPEAN YEAR OF...?

Each year, the European Commission focuses on a specific issue of special interest to European society. In brief, the concept of the “European Year” serves as a platform for encouraging policymakers and stakeholders to promote a selected issue. In every year since 1983, the EU has picked a theme of action, with the goal of educating the largest possible audience and to attract the attention of governments and citizens of Member States on a particular issue, in order to change the attitudes and behaviors of the people.

By inviting various players to commit to specific action and goals, tangible progress can be achieved by raising public awareness, enhancing cross-sectoral dialogue and changing the social environment. The ideas should be transformed into new solutions and implemented as national policies which should help to successfully tackle the distinct challenges Europe is facing.

NGOS PLAY A KEY ROLE

This framework offers great support to the everyday initiatives of NGOs in their fields of activity. The common goal is a vivid civil society with participative citizens, and the NGOs have the means to engage society at a grass-roots level. It is a commonly known fact that the more people that act together, the stronger the result. Hence, why NGOs are crucial partners in the promotion of a selected issue.

In this Make your European Year brochure, we would like to share with you some basic information and tips on how to effectively leverage the support of this initiative in the areas of advocacy and public awareness, and networking and funding. We will give you tips on:

- » **How to get involved** so you are informed and able to participate and utilize all available resources
- » **Which means of support are available to you** in areas of promotion and funding
- » **What networking opportunities** does it offer domestically and internationally
- » **How to promote** your project in the framework of the “European Year”
- » **Interesting projects** carried out by NGOs in the Visegrad region

Simply, how you can contribute to the development of active civil society and exercise different means which will help you to achieve your goals and fulfill the mission of your organization.

THE VISEGRAD COOPERATION PROJECT IN BRIEF

This brochure presents some of the results of the „Cooperation of Visegrad NGOs“ project which is based on an initiative started by the Forum 2000 Foundation brings together umbrella organizations from the Visegrad region in order to identify common issues and share best practices. Partner organizations in this project are:

Forum 2000 Foundation, Czech Republic

1st Slovak Non-Profit Service Center (1.SNSC), Slovakia

Association of Public Benefit Organizations (AVPO), Czech Republic

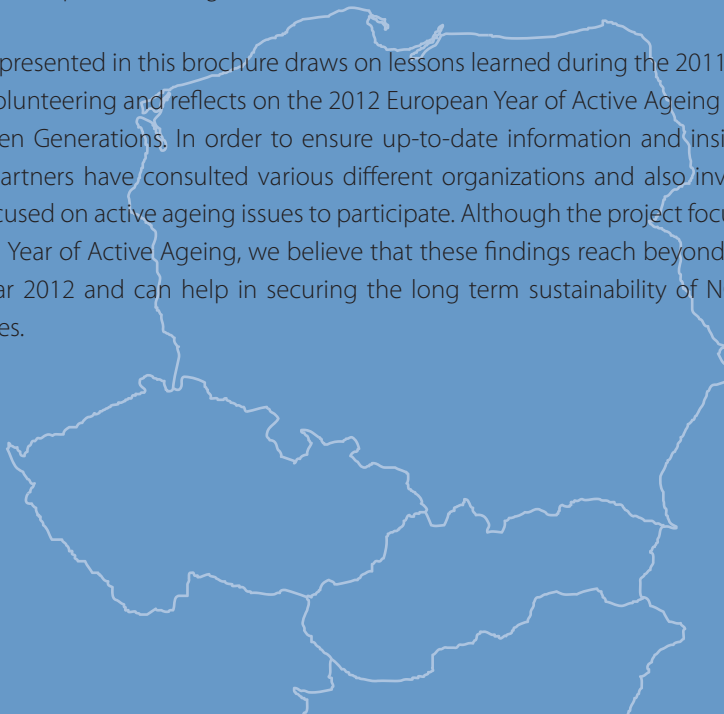
National Federation of Polish NGO (OFOP), Poland

Nonprofit Information and Training Centre (NIOK), Hungary

Our objectives are:

- » Reinforcing partnership of NGOs from the V4 countries to benefit from joining efforts in tackling problem of these similar legal environments.
- » Forming common supranational strategies of reinforcing sustainability of NGO sector in V4 countries.
- » Proposing and campaigning for mainstreaming recommendations and measures reinforcing sustainability of the civil society based on lessons learned from those who already have experience using them.

The information presented in this brochure draws on lessons learned during the 2011 European Year of Volunteering and reflects on the 2012 European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations. In order to ensure up-to-date information and insight, the V4 project partners have consulted various different organizations and also invited organizations focused on active ageing issues to participate. Although the project focuses on the European Year of Active Ageing, we believe that these findings reach beyond the scope of the year 2012 and can help in securing the long term sustainability of NGOs in the V4 countries.







FORUM 2000 FOUNDATION

Czech Republic



The Forum 2000 Foundation pursues the legacy of Václav Havel by supporting the values of democracy and respect for human rights, assisting the development of civil society, and encouraging religious, cultural and ethnic tolerance. It provides a platform for global leaders, as well as thinkers and courageous individuals from every field of endeavor, to openly debate and share their thoughts regarding these critical issues. It was founded in 1996 as a joint initiative of the late Czech President Václav Havel, Japanese philanthropist Yohei Sasakawa, and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Elie Wiesel. Among its most important activities are the Forum 2000 Conference and the NGO fair called NGO Market.

Forum 2000 initiated the V4 cooperation project in 2010 within the NGO Market framework. It serves mainly as a facilitator of joint consultations between the project partners.

www.forum2000.cz

AVPO ASOCIACE VEŘEJNĚ
PROSPĚŠNÝCH ORGANIZACÍ

ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC BENEFIT ORGANIZATIONS (AVPO)

Czech Republic



The Association of Public Benefit Organizations (AVPO) is an umbrella group that associates and supports non-profit organizations stressing transparency and professionalism in their publically beneficial activities. The AVPO participates in the creation of an environment that is conducive to public benefit organizations, influences legislation, and is partner for lawmakers, the public sector, businesses, and the media.

www.avpo.cz



NONPROFIT INFORMATION AND TRAINING CENTRE (NIOK)

Hungary



Nonprofit Information and Training Centre (NIOK) Foundation was founded by the Non-profit Research Association in 1993 with the aim of strengthening civil society in Hungary through the activities of non-governmental organisations and setting up a support system that facilitates their long-term operation. NIOK devises programmes that improve the work of organisations, enhance their professionalism and effectiveness, and strengthen the third sector's links to local government, the business sector and society as a whole.

www.niok.hu



1. SLOVENSKÉ NEZISKOVÉ SERVISNÉ CENTRUM

1ST SLOVAK NON-PROFIT SERVICE CENTER (1NSC)

Slovak Republic



Mission of the 1st Slovak Non-profit Service Center is to contribute towards creation of transparent professional and ethical social environment in Slovakia through support of the non-governmental organizations. It was established in 1999 to provide advice and help in areas of tax, accounting and legal issues. The Center provides a daily updated database and overview of all important legislative initiatives concerning the NGO sector and based on its expertise, it also serves as an advocate of the NGO sector in communication with government and during preparation of new legislation.

www.1snc.sk



Ogólnopolska
Federacja
Organizacji
Pozarządowych

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF POLISH NGOS (OFOP)

Poland



OFOP advocates for favorable environment of civil society and participates in regulation influencing civil society operations. OFOP supports cross-sectoral partnerships and assists NGO representatives in institutional dialogue. We cooperate with voluntary organizations, watchdogs, and think-tanks to ensure ongoing discussion on the condition of the civil sector and areas of future change. OFOP is committed to share best practice and work towards effective involvement of citizens on European level through international cooperation and trans-border initiatives.

www.ofop.eu

BE INSPIRED, BE SUCCESSFUL!

Here we present a number of highly useful tips and recommendations we have collected. Do not be afraid to copy what has worked in the past, add your own ideas and your style, mix the ingredients together and be the one who inspires!

To know **who to contact** is essential. Preparations for the upcoming year usually start well ahead. Make sure you do not miss your opportunity to get involved.

- » Visit official website of the European Commission and you learn what, why, when, where, and how.
- » Check official national websites dedicated to the “European year” to find information about goals and plans for the year in your country.
- » Contact your national coordinator (usually a relevant Ministry) to get more information about current events and how you can participate.
- » Join dedicated working groups. Do you already know every piece of information above? Do not hesitate and get involved as much as possible!

Make media **play your card**

Each year, a dedicated communication campaign both on the EU level and the national levels is created. Find out how your topic fits in the framework of the campaign and which tools or channels you can use.

- » Join the team to create national campaign. This way you can influence what is going to be communicated during the whole year.
- » See if there is a chance to use dedicated channels such as TV or radio spots to broadcast the spots.
- » While national media are important, often you are more likely to get attention in regional and third sector media. Information related to the topic of the “European Year” is likely to get even more attention.
- » Do not wait for journalists to ask you about your project. Inform them about the “European Year” and how your projects contribute to fulfilling of its goals.
- » Use channels available among the participating organizations. Dedicated websites, bulletins, newsletters and other forms of regular communication can help spread the word about you in the professional community.
- » Each year, the European Commission releases a “European Year” slogan. Use it and add your own catch-phrase which makes the appeal better tailored to your activities.

Seek **reliable partners**

Partner organizations will help you make your project more effective and wider-targeting. The topic of the “European Year” always focuses on an issue which is important to the whole society. Likewise, it is crucial to a great part of NGOs and usually it stretches across the whole NGO sector. Don’t walk alone, the “European Year” framework gives you a great opportunity to network and meet new partners.

- » Attend “European Year” conferences, workshops and other events to see what is currently going on in areas of and beyond your activities.
- » Make connections with similar organizations and explore new ways how you can cooperate with partners from other parts of the NGO world.
- » The goals related to the selected issue often include more research and deeper professional discussion. Become part of the expert group, learn from the others and contribute with your own expertise.
- » The selected issue is usually embodied also in long-term national strategies. Find a relevant governmental partner and discuss how you can use your “European Year” initiative to start a new cooperation.
- » EU-wide attention gives you a perfect opportunity to find new partners both in your country and on the international level.
- » Cooperate! If you have common ideas and interests, put them together; your fund-raising options and chances for successful implementation of your project will rocket.

Funding matters

Don’t let funds scarcity to stop your ideas. A selected “European Year” topic is very often reflected also by funding institutions.

- » The EU-level funding programs are open to all creative and innovative projects and usually reflected also in yearly priorities.
- » Your national coordinating body can create a special funding program to support selected projects, apply soon and offer your ideas.
- » Local authorities are part of the team. See what support they offer and how can you use it.
- » Do not forget to approach other institutional and business partners to see if they are interested and how can they get involved.

A few more tips

- » The European Commission organizes a tour throughout the EU in which it passes from country to country. See how your organization can participate.
- » There are several national and international competitions which motivate and give an opportunity to popularize your work and share the best practices.
- » If not everything is crystal clear, turn to your local European Commission Representation for more information.

During the European Year of Volunteering 2011, dozens of interesting, original and innovative projects took place in the Visegrad countries. In 2012, many projects related to the topic of active ageing are going to take place. On the following pages, we present to you some of them. At each project, we point out some useful recommendations to help you carry out a similar project or get inspired in creating your own.

VOLUNTEERING AS SEEN BY YOUNG PEOPLE

ADRA (Czech Republic)

www.adra.cz

Widely acknowledged Czech humanitarian organization ADRA in cooperation with volunteers from General Electric have introduced a new view point on volunteering, literally.

Young people watched volunteers in society, specifically in the fields of medicine or culture, through the vantage point of a movie camera lens. They filmed the volunteers' day-to-day work in order to understand the motivations behind volunteer's work, and to recognize the obstacles volunteers have to face, and most importantly to become a part of the volunteering community for a while.

An individual or a group had the task of creating a short movie, no longer than a maximum length of 5 minutes. There was only one category in which the commission judged 22 movies. The winners received awards and ADRA presented a DVD containing all of the movies in the competition.

Get inspired

- » ADRA used a perfect method to lower your own costs and eliminate risk of work force shortage; **collaboration with private company** can:
 - » save you money;
 - » provide you with excited volunteers; and
 - » can help you increase your media presence among the public.
- » The original intention was to create two **age** groups 1) under 18 2) 18 – 26; because there were not enough entries in the latter **category**, organizers merged the groups into one.
 - » If you plan to compete within a specific age category, be sure you can meet its expectations and requirements



EUROPEAN VOLUNTEERS TOUR

Iuventia (Slovak Republic)

www.iuventia.sk

Non-governmental organization, Iuventia, was the key organizer of the one week tour of a special bus, which promoted volunteering in the five biggest Slovakian cities. The event was realized in cooperation with the EU Parliament Information office, European Commission Representation in the Slovak Republic, Slovakian Government and Youth in Action foundation.

The organizers chose to visit five centers of five different regions, thus effectively touring throughout Slovakia. The aim was to popularize volunteering in each city among the broader public and private companies, and both local and regional authorities.

Volunteering in the form of community service was set to demonstrate how beneficial volunteering might be for the improvement of quality of life in the city. No less of an important objective was to show how much money can be saved by incorporating organizing volunteering into public city service and, last but not least, to tempt the broad public to volunteer.

To promote The Tour, the Government issued leaflets and used its official information office. The actual program was very interactive and colorful. All organizations presented their projects in stances or on stage. Accompanied by folk dances and regional music, The Tour seemed to be pulsing, vivid and full of energy, exactly what volunteering should be like.

Get inspired

- » The project is an ever-shining example of **profiting from high-level cooperation**:
 - » involvement of an official partner institution will add credibility to your project and expand your organizational capacity;
 - » you can get access to official informational channels which you would not be able to use otherwise.
- » People interested in your project might live **outside your town**:
 - » do not stay limited to the capital city; the smaller cities might be more open to new ideas and to hosting interesting events;
 - » a successful event organized on a smaller scale can give you experience and a perfect base to build upon a larger scale event;



- » cooperate with partners to promote your case in other places which you would not be able to target alone.
- » Identify carefully your **target groups**:
 - » utilize the fact that your project might be important to more than one group (eg. local authorities, local NGOs and broad public);
 - » having more target groups widens your project's potential impact.

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERING

DUHA (Czech Republic)

www.duha.cz

Civic Association Duha has a long-term experience with international volunteer cooperation. It took advantage of its previously gained know-how and developed a brand new project connected to the European Year of Volunteering focused on international cooperation.

Its goal was to actively broaden the scope of mutual exchange of knowledge and practices between various European volunteer organizations. The specific focus was placed on networking activities, on motivation as a key factor in volunteering and on enhancing cross-border communication.

Duha, therefore, hosted a number of workshops, each on a specific topic. The selected coordinating partners from Germany, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland and Serbia shared their volunteering practices and agreed on strengthening the collaboration between the groups. Group collaboration can already be seen in the popular work camps where volunteers can find amusement and self-satisfaction. To further motivate young volunteers, the organizers awarded the most active and successful volunteers, declared a photography competition for the participants of the work camps, thus adding a new, fresh dimension to the volunteering.

Get inspired

- » Do not be afraid of **international cooperation**:
 - » involving partners from different countries gives your project a truly intercultural dimension and adds to its attractiveness;
 - » you can use foreign national coordinators to find and get in touch with potential partners.
- » The cooperation based on **exchange** of volunteers, experience and ideas:
 - » sharing travel, accommodation, PR and other costs can save you a lot of money;
 - » gives your staff international experience which can be implemented in your future projects.
- » To **get really broad attention** to your project from wider audience:
 - » make your project attractive at a first glance (eg. Duha connected its project with traveling);



- » come up with an outreach beyond the actual volunteering work;
- » involving international partners can make your project more effective for media.

SENIOR POINT – CONTACT POINT FOR ELDERLY PEOPLE

Společně (Czech Republic)

www.spolecne.org

The aim of the project is to create a network of places where elderly people can get assistance and information important for their life ranging from cultural events, available social benefits and the healthcare system, to police information. Cooperation with various institutions and business entities will expand the scope of the project. This will help older people (55+) to orientate in a daily stream of information and thus help them in communication with various institutions and support their active life.

Professionally trained staff organizes a number of courses, seminars and leisure-time activities. They teach seniors how to use modern technologies such as the internet, focus on basic knowledge of finance, personal security, health prevention and other topics.

Get inspired

- » The project directly **embraces this year's priority** – active ageing:
 - » it responds to the needs of elderly people;
 - » it brings an innovative and comprehensive approach.
- » Involving of a **number of partners** helps to considerably expand its outreach:
 - » it provides assistance on many levels – institutional, educational, social and economic.



ADOPTION OF PEOPLE AT ANY AGE

C.A.R.D.O. (Slovak Republic)

www.cardo-eu.net

The project aims to connect different generations through networks of various age groups which are to interact, communicate and share their experiences and skills. The groups will be tightly connected and thus recognize the others' motivations, priorities and ways of thinking. During the project, volunteers from schools and institutions for elderly people will regularly organize events and initiatives to educate the broader public in different aspects of life of various generations. Through regular interaction, all generations should deepen their solidarity, responsibility and generate mutual respect and understanding. Elderly people will benefit from social interaction and information about new technologies, while younger volunteers can use their new skills and experiences to apply towards their future professional career.

Learn from the project

- » The theme of the "European Year" can be viewed in a **broader scope**:
 - » activities can target groups other than solely elderly people;
 - » through the inclusion of other age groups, the project responds to the need of promoting dialogue between generations;
 - » more types of beneficiaries support involvement of larger audience;
 - » the outcome of the project contributes to the goal of a long-term employment policy.



PRO WOMAN 50+

ESPAR 50+ (Poland)

www.espar50.org

This programme promotes a healthy and active lifestyle among women over fifty, and among local communities. Being in good physical and mental shape should in the long-run help elderly people to feel secure, maintain their independence, and promote their physical and emotional well-being. This initiative organized in cooperation with the Polish Ministry of Sport will address 260 women from different regions of Poland. The participants will be involved in different recreational activities (nordic walking, aqua aerobic, tai-chi) twice a week, as well as, be required to attend a series of lectures on physical health. The women should then propagate this healthy life-style in their local communities. The project wishes to raise awareness among both older people and the general public, of the opportunities open to senior citizens later in life.

Get inspired

- » The project focuses on a specific activity which, in the **long-term**, influences other areas of an individuals' life.
- » **Traditional activities** can be very attractive to older people and can be combined with **modern approaches** or activities.
- » Asking participants to be **ambassadors in their community** creates a valuable multiplier effect.
- » **Partnership** can allow you to broaden the scope of your project and involve more people. This in turn can also attract media attention.

IFORUM

Infopoly Alapítvány (Hungary)

www.50Plusz.net

Forum of the Hungarian IT Organizations for Information Society has created a website to make the internet and the digital world a more familiar and friendly place for people over fifty. During the European Year of Active Ageing, the organization invented the idea, Grandparents – Grandchildren IT Competition. The initiative encourages grandparents and their grandchildren to compete as a pair with other grandparents and grandchildren. It motivates elderly people to learn how to use technologies, which can be useful in their lives. At the same time, the activity strengthens the connection between older and young people through mutual support and competition. The project also combines online and live activities.

Get inspired

- » There are several ways how to make people interested in your projects – competitions and **use of modern technologies** are certainly one of them.
- » Build your project on **your core expertise** to maximize its effects and minimize costs.
- » Combination of **online and offline activities** expands reach of the project while keeping personal side of the project.

2012: THE EUROPEAN YEAR OF ACTIVE AGEING AND SOLIDARITY BETWEEN GENERATIONS

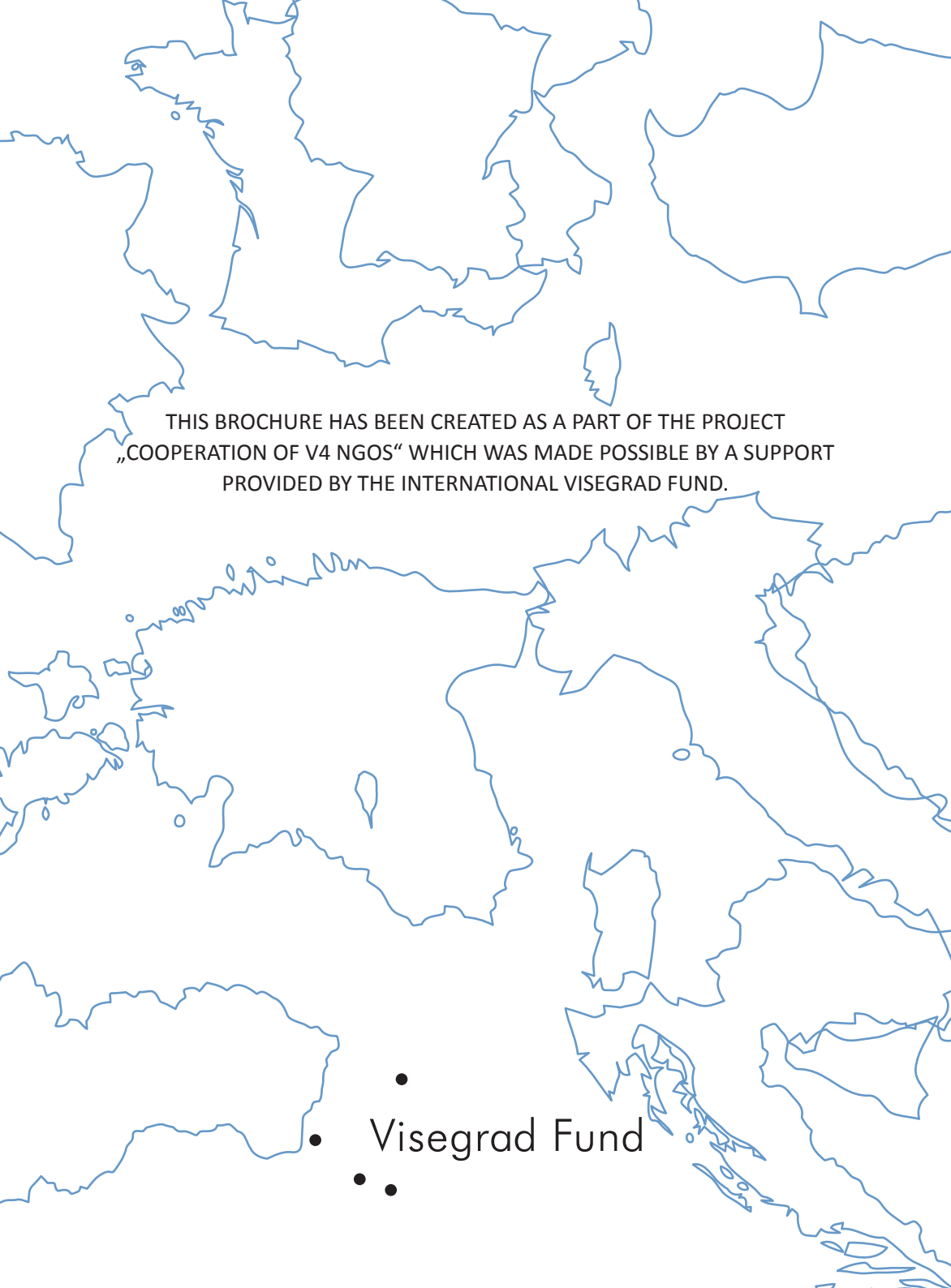
The year 2012 is dedicated to the issue of active ageing and solidarity between generations. The year is intended to raise awareness of the contribution that older people make to society. It seeks to encourage policymakers and relevant stakeholders at all levels to take action with the aim of creating better opportunities for active ageing and strengthening solidarity between generations.

These goals are promoted in three areas:

- » **Employment:** to give older workers better chances in the labor market.
- » **Participation in Society:** greater recognition of what older people bring to society and create more supportive conditions for them.
- » **Independent living:** empowering younger people who age too, to be responsible so that they can remain in charge of their own lives as long as possible.

List of the “European Year” topics

- » **2013 Year of Citizens**
- » 2012 Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations
- » 2011 Year of volunteering
- » 2010 Year of Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion
- » 2009 Year of Creativity and Innovation
- » 2008 Year of Intercultural Dialogue
- » 2007 Year of Equal Opportunities for All
- » 2006 Year of Workers’ Mobility
- » 2005 Year of Citizenship through Education
- » 2004 Year of Education through Sport
- » 2003 Year of People with Disabilities



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