



**Northern  
Periphery  
Programme**

2007–2013

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



14<sup>th</sup> June 2012

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Older People for Older People Project wins RegioStars 2012 Awards**

**The Older People for Older People (O4O) project has won the RegioStars 2012 Awards in the category “*Inclusive Growth: Strategies, initiatives or projects addressing the challenge of demographic change and supporting active ageing*”. The winners were announced at an award ceremony during the Regions for Economic Change Conference on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2012 in Brussels. The award was accepted by Ms. Kate Stephen, from the Centre for Rural Health in Inverness Scotland, who managed the project in Highland and took over as Project Lead in the final stages, and Mr. Jim Millard from the Scottish Government, national representative on the Northern Periphery Programme Monitoring Committee. Representatives from the Managing Authority and Programme Secretariat also attended the ceremony.**

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. This year, the European Commission received a record number of 107 applications.

Commissioner Johannes Hahn for Regional Policy stated about the winning project: *"I am pleased to see a project illustrating the benefits of territorial cooperation recognized through the RegioStars awards. It shows that by combining efforts, EU regions can find concrete solutions to the common challenges they face. Partners across Europe's northern periphery have worked closely together to develop new support systems and services for their older citizens living in rural areas. This is indeed an excellent example of the good use of EU investment."*

The O4O project was designed in response to the increasing proportions of older people in Europe; especially peripheral regions such as the Northern Periphery which 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.

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.



European Union  
European Regional Development Fund

Although the project is finished, many of 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 to facilitate the transfer of expertise and knowledge.

*"This award recognises the incredible contribution made by older people to their communities. The project has demonstrated that older people themselves are central in developing solutions to the challenges they face. I have been inspired by, and am very proud of their achievements which have improved the lives of many people in villages and rural areas in Europe's Northern Periphery",* expressed project coordinator Kate Stephen in response to winning the RegioStars Awards.

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.

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 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 Highlands and islands, that it has won from over 100 entries."*

A video about the winning O4O project can be found on the RegioStars website, [www.ec.europa.eu/regiostars](http://www.ec.europa.eu/regiostars). More details about the O4O project are available on their website, [www.o4os.eu](http://www.o4os.eu).

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

### **Contact information**

Northern Periphery Programme 2007-2013  
Kirsti Mijnhijmer, Programme Manager for Information & Communication  
Tel: +45 3283 3784, E-mail: [kirsti.mijnhijmer@northernperiphery.eu](mailto:kirsti.mijnhijmer@northernperiphery.eu)  
Website: [www.northernperiphery.eu](http://www.northernperiphery.eu)

University of the Highlands and Islands  
Alison Hay, Communications Manager  
Tel. +44 463 279206 E-mail: [alison.hay@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:alison.hay@uhi.ac.uk)

