



# **ACTIONPLAN FOR REGION DALARNA - SWEDEN**

## **Silver SMEs Project**



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# AGEING IN REGION DALARNA, SWEDEN



PEOPLE OVER 65: **24%**  
OF DALARNA'S POPULATION



IN RURAL AREAS  
UP TO **27.3%**



DALARNA IS AMONG THE LEAST POPULATED SWEDISH REGIONS

Population density

- 0 - 11
- 12 - 30
- 30 - 52
- 52 - 356



THE RURAL ECONOMY  
**SERVICES SECTOR** IS  
LESS DEVELOPED IN  
RURAL AREAS



66% OF WORKERS  
OPERATE IN **SERVICES** IN  
THE REGION AGAINST **49%**  
IN RURAL AREAS

## ← Silver Economy

HAS MAJOR **DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**  
TO SEIZE IN REGION DALARNA ...

ON ICT TRAININGS, MOBILITY  
DEVICES, SMART TECH ...







## Population and livelihoods

North Middle Sweden has the highest dependency ratio in Sweden, requiring fewer people to support more people of working age. This risks leading to labour shortages, reduced tax power, increased demand for welfare services and that the region's companies find it more difficult to find skills. The employment rate in North Middle Sweden is below the national survey. The proportion in working age is expected to be slightly lower in 2028 than in 2018, mainly due to the proportion of older people being expected to increase. The fact that more people are getting older is positive, but leads to strains on the welfare system that are designed for a demographic structure where a larger proportion of the population is self-employed. Here, innovative solutions for housing care, nursing and recreation must be linked to, for example, opportunities in the so-called silver economy with goods and services that are developed for a senior market. Immigration leads to a rejuvenation of the population in North Middle Sweden and can contribute to solutions to problems linked to the changing demographic structure, for example counteracting the labour shortage by filling the skills gap in companies. Increasing diversity creates the conditions for creativity and innovation.

By using smart specialization objectives proposed to the North Middle Sweden should the work linked to an aging population for developing solutions so that the elderly can stay at home longer, so that the elderly continue to be active and live a healthy life. Smarter homes in the action plan are one good example that inspire until an increased focus on the demographic challenges and the opportunities in the “senior market” that the so-called silver economy offers.

Importantly linked to the ERDF in the next program period are also the social sustainability perspectives, i.e. that the program should cater to disadvantaged groups in society. Here we see an opportunity with the initiatives that we propose to both promote gender equality as care is traditionally female-coded industries and should be able to attract a higher proportion of women, as well as that innovations for increased quality of life for the elderly would also benefit an otherwise often overlooked group in society.





## Short Summary

### Interreg Europe SILVER SMEs: Action Plan for Region Dalarna, Sweden

**Smarter Homes as a Growth Accelerator** is a growth accelerator project that aims to develop the Best Practice Senior Housing Solution Smarter Homes in Dalarna as a test place for companies developing products for the elderly. The project includes enabling financial support for companies to test prototypes and develop market-ready products to be showcased in the show flat (inspired by the Accelerators of SILVER SMEs Best Practice Silver Surfer 4.0 in France).

Smarter Homes is a show flat and inspiration apartment located in one of the municipal real estate Limited company Kopparstaden safe housing in Falun. The target group is the elderly over the age of 65 who want to ensure safe and independent living. Additional target groups are also the elderly's relatives and employees in health care and home care. Smarter Homes is run by the central Kopparstaden Limited, Dalarna's Assistive Aid Centre (Region Dalarna Falu municipality and Dalarna University).

The purpose of the apartment is to:

- Contribute to improved health among the elderly - with extra consideration for safety and injuries.
- Show smart products that are available for the resident to be able to create a safer and smarter home on their own.
- Contribute to the increase in demand for products, and in that way influence the supply on the market.
- Smarter homes are also there for staff training and to increase knowledge about welfare technology.



## Part I – General information

Project: SILVER SMEs

Partner organisation: Region Dalarna

Country: Sweden

Nuts2 region: North Middle Sweden

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## Part II – Policy context

The action plan is expected to influence investments in jobs and growth.

**Policy instrument:** ERDF North Middle Sweden and the Dalarna Regional Strategy including Agenda for Smart Specialisation in Dalarna.

About 30 per cent of the population in rural area of Dalarna is over the age of 65, and the percentage of elderly over 75 will increase in the next 10-15 years. A high percentage of elderly in the population constitutes major challenges, but also creates opportunities for businesses to develop services and products for the senior market (the silver economy). One of the objectives of Region Dalarna's participation in SILVER SMEs has been to create a basis to develop and improve



the texts in North Middle Sweden's regional fund to encourage more projects to be initiated that utilise the possibilities in the silver economy.

Interreg Europe supports experiential exchange between regions to improve regional policies and programmes, and enable the dissemination of new working methods and models. The SILVER SMEs project that began in 2018 promotes entrepreneurship and innovation around the health and well-being of the elderly and has the goal of supporting service and product development for the silver economy. Focus for the project has been experiential exchange, not investments. By exchanging experiences surrounding methods and approaches, the project has strived to create opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to discover business opportunities in the silver economy, identify *best practices*, develop regional strategies and improve the programme texts for the structural fund programmes in the EU's next budget period (2021–2027). The project has been led by *Diaputación Provincial de Teruel* (Spain) and the other project partners have been Region Dalarna, *Comunidade Intermunicipal do Ave* (Portugal), *Cork Institute of Technology* (Ireland), *Pososki Razvojni Center* (Slovenia), *Sociedad para el Desarrollo de la Provincia Burgos* (Spain), *GIE Eurasanté* (France), *Agencja Rozwoju Regionalnego SA* (Poland) and *Euromontana* (France). Within the project, 70 good examples have been exchanged between the regions, of which 23 examples through a *peer-review* process have been chosen as *best practices*.

Within the scope of SILVER SMEs, Region Dalarna began a stakeholder group early on with the involvement of Region Dalarna, Dalarna Science Park, Dalarna University, Visit Dalarna, Dalarna Assistive Aids Centre (formerly LD Hjälpmedel) and the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth. The stakeholder group met once per semester and members were invited to the project's interregional meetings. The project has identified best practices in the region that are presented in the scope of the partnership. In September 2020, Visit Dalarna presented "Gamification Dalarna: Senior tourism and accessibility developments"





*Gamification Dalarna* is a development idea within innovative experience production that builds on combining the gaming industry with the tourism industry to create new dimensions in experiences before, during and after visits to the region. Other best practices developed within the scope of the project are:

- Sätergläntan Folk High School and its offering of courses and programmes that lead to entrepreneurship among the elderly
- Naturum Fulufjället, which adapted the national park's accessibility for the elderly
- Smarter Homes show flat with smart solutions for independent and safe housing for the elderly (Kopparstaden)
- Byggdialog Dalarna for the construction of homes for the elderly in the region's municipalities
- Gullogården elderly care for fragile and dependent people contributing to the development of social entrepreneurship

Experiences from the project implementation have been spread through newsletters, a website and brochures. Regular reporting was made from Region Dalarna to Diaputació Provincial de Teruel. Interregional exchanges were held during the project period through a kick-off in Teruel, Spain and study visits to Lille, France (2019), Tolmin, Slovenia (2019), Lubuskie, Poland (2019) and Cork, Ireland (2020). Due to COVID-19, no joint study visits were held after this. A study visit to Region Dalarna was to have been held in autumn 2020, but has been postponed to a later date.



## **North Middle Sweden's and Region Dalarnas development work**

In Dalarna's agenda for smart specialisation, two priority areas have had a clear link to the silver economy: innovative experience production, health, and welfare. SILVER SMEs has contributed to increasing the knowledge of and educational needs that result from a growing percentage of elderly in the population, but have also pointed out the possibilities for entrepreneurship with a focus on the silver economy. This project has thereby made an important contribution to developing the regional innovation work in a way that corresponds to the intentions of smart specialisation in Region Dalarna.

An ageing population is both a social challenge and a driver for the region, and the regional development strategy (2021-2027) has several prioritised areas with a clear connection to the silver economy, such as a competitive Dalarna and a cohesive Dalarna. Within the area of a competitive Dalarna, it is emphasised that the knowledge and competencies of every individual shall be utilised. A priority is to work for a gender-equal labour market and an economy where the skills of all individuals are utilised regardless of age. Within a cohesive Dalarna, the region is developing a coordinated public planning that, among other things, increases access to health and social care.

In the programme proposal for ERDF North Middle Sweden (2021-2027), entrepreneurship on equal terms is prioritised. The programme proposal focuses on sustainable development that includes economic, social and environmental dimensions, where for example age does not constitute an obstacle to gaining access to resources and results of the regional development work. Innovative solutions for housing, social care, health care and recreation linked to possibilities within the silver economy with products that are developed for a senior market are described as a major opportunity for the programme. It is important for universities and vocational programmes to offer education and continuing professional development based on ideas of life-long learning in order to achieve



the political objective of developing skills for smart specialisation, structural transformation and entrepreneurship in North Middle Sweden.

Region Dalarna's participation in SILVER SMEs has been based on Dalarna's long experience of working with the silver economy. The project has strived to promote the innovation work in two of the region's four prioritised areas of knowledge within smart specialisation, innovative experience production and health/welfare, and based on the interregional learning in the project, has gathered experience and knowledge about how the demographic challenge the region is facing is being handled and the senior market's potential. Proposals on continued activities in the scope of SILVER SMEs that are provided in this action plan are well in line with North Middle Sweden's and Region Dalarna's upcoming development and investment plans.

### Part III – Planned activities

#### Activity

Name: **Smarter Homes as a Test and Demonstration Arena**

**Goal:** Supporting the possibilities of SMEs to develop innovative products and services to benefit the older population and increase growth and competition in Region Dalarna.

**Policy instrument:** ERDF Regional Operational Programme T.O.3.  
Improve the capacity and competitiveness of SMEs





Smarter Homes is a show apartment in Falun where companies in the silver economy are invited to exhibit their products. The target group is older people over the age of 65 who want to ensure a safe and independent home, as well as their families and employees in health care and the home-help services. Smarter Homes is an effort in the knowledge that we have an older population and that they should have a possibility to continue living at home safely, securely and independently. The work on the show flat within Smarter Homes also fulfils an important function in the light of the future social challenge that Region Dalarna is facing in the form of a growing elderly population that will entail a greater strain on the region's healthcare system. This increases the need for innovative products and solutions that make it possible for the older population to continue living longer in their own homes.

Potential customers of Smarter Homes' products are invited to visit the show flat to discover that digital solutions and aids there are, test them and choose the products that best match their needs. The companies that exhibit their products receive free exposure and marketing. At present, some 20 companies are established with their products in the flat, and more companies are being invited to exhibit their products. The apartment has had more than 800 visitors, who have been able to test the numerous technical aids offered to create a more secure and smarter home and improve the health of older residents. In Interreg's SILVER SMEs, Region Dalarnas Smarter Homes has been identified as a *best practice* in the category *Housing & Home Assistance*.

The extensive interest from companies in participating in Smarter Homes combined with the number of potential customers in the region means that there are good possibilities of shifting Smarter Homes into high gear so that more companies have an opportunity to exhibit their products and so that a larger part of the region's older population have an opportunity to see them. This is taking place through Smarter Homes as Test and Demonstration Arena.

**Relevance:**

One of the major challenges for Region Dalarna is an ageing population and the need to manage this (and other) social challenges by better utilising, developing and commercialising innovations by strengthening the interaction between large companies, SMEs, the public sector, academia and civil society.<sup>1</sup>

North Middle Sweden's programme proposal for ERDF 2021-2027 points out the need for innovative solutions for housing, social care, health care and recreation towards the silver economy. The project Smarter Homes as a Growth Accelerator meets several of the political objectives and especially the objectives for the regional fund in North Middle Sweden, not least the objective to develop the innovative capacity in SMEs linked to social challenges (PO1).<sup>2</sup>

Smarter Homes as a Test and Demonstration Arena will increase Smarter Homes' visibility, activate more companies and their business opportunities and generate more products for the elderly target group (65+) who want to secure a safe and independent home. The project is in line with the ERDF programme for North Middle Sweden and the region's strategy for Smart Specialisation in the healthcare area.

Smarter Homes as a Test and Demonstration Arena is a supplement to the already under way and successful activities in Smarter Homes, and has the aim of further strengthening the activity's link to Dalarna's strategy for Smart Specialisation.

**Content:**

Within the framework of SILVER SME's, Region Dalarna studied many international experiences, methods and *best practices* in terms of development and commercialisation of assistive products for the older population. They constitute sources of inspiration and identify potential collaborative partners for a broader effort. The project Smarter Homes as Test and Demonstration Arena will collaborate with these activities with the aim of promoting future development and

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<sup>1</sup> Draft of A New Dala Strategy (23 October 2020)

<sup>2</sup> Programme proposal programme ERDF 2021-2027 North Middle Sweden (11 December 2020)





business opportunities in the silver economy. The project is about smart specialisation and builds on the well-developed collaboration within Smarter Homes that exists between actors (mainly at the supplier level), develops a test bed and supports businesses to develop and find markets for products targeted at the older target group (65+) who want to secure a safe and independent home.

Smarter Homes as a Test and Demonstration Arena is based on the experiences and approaches used in the scope of *Silver Surfer* and *Homilys Adapted Residences* (France), as well as *Health Innovation Hub* (Ireland):

- *Silver Surfer*, which is being conducted in the French region of Hauts-De-France, can inspire Smarter Homes to benefit from an effective approach when it comes to stimulating SMEs to develop products benefiting the silver economy. Through *Silver Surfer*, companies are offered the possibility of seeking financing to develop product prototypes aimed at the silver economy's target groups. Promising businesses then get their prototypes judged by a jury that consists of healthcare actors, who are intended end-users of the product (such as elderly care centres and home-help services). In a later phase, three companies are chosen to receive additional financing to further develop the prototype into a product that can ultimately be introduced on the market.
- The French development project *Homilys Adapted Residences*, which is also being conducted in the Hauts-De-France region, provides a needs and safety-adapted home for older people who are still healthy enough to live on their own, but are in need of adapted forms of housing. The project promotes innovations in the silver economy by marketing various products, such as safety-adapted furniture and digital solutions, which facilitate daily life for the elderly.





- *Health Innovation Hub* (HIHI) is a regional development project being conducted in Cork, Ireland that has its starting point in the fact that developing healthcare products is a very long, difficult and technical process for SMEs. In light of this, HIHI's activities offer advice and guidance to SMEs with regard to product development, processes concerning public procurement and health prioritisation needs. In addition to this, HIHI pilot tests well-developed prototypes in real healthcare settings, provides expert assessments to validate product prototypes and verifies solutions that the healthcare sector is in great need of. The overall purpose is to stimulate innovation development of products, services and technologies in the Irish and global healthcare market.

Smarter Homes as a Test and Demonstration arena will be run by Dalarna Science Park

The project aims to, through a feasibility study, investigate the possibilities of developing a Smarter Home in a longer project as a test bed for companies that develop products for the elderly.

The feasibility study aims to:

- evaluate and lay the foundation for giving companies support to test prototypes and develop ready-to-market products that can be tested and displayed in the apartment.
- clarify which actor is most suitable to own a full-scale project and to review what financing is possible.

Within the project, Dalarna Science Park look at the possibilities to develop the prototype into a marketable product and are given access to exhibit their product in Smarter Homes' show flat. A further dimensioning of the size of the call for proposal (budget), number of companies to be given the opportunity to develop prototypes and a model for evaluation are to be prepared based on the experiences from the activities in *Silver Surfer* in France. *Silver Surfer* has been part of the Interreg project SILVER SMEs and named a *best practice* there. In the



long term, the goal is to be able to have an exchange of products between Smarter Homes and *Homily's Adapted Residence*, which can create export opportunities for companies that are part of Smart Homes as a Growth Accelerator.

Once the project has been concluded, an external evaluation will be done of Smarter Homes as a Test and Demonstration Arena

**Involved stakeholders:**

Within Smarter Homes, the central actors are Kopparstaden AB, Dalarna's Assistive Aid Centre (Region Dalarna), Falu Municipality and Dalarna University. These actors are on the steering committee and the project Smarter Homes as a Test and Demonstration Arena.

Other stakeholders are the target group, SMEs and Dalarna's municipalities. Dalarna Science Park want to analyse the possibility to stimulate small and medium-sized companies in Dalarna to develop products for the benefit of the silver economy by showing business opportunities in the area, in order to generate more products for the target group older than 65 years who want to ensure a safe and independent living.

The project is in line with the recently developed Regional Development Strategy and the region's strategy for Smart Specialization in the health care area. By using the apartment as a test bed, there are great opportunities for the companies that have products and services for the target group to test and further develop their products in close dialogue with users.

The feasibility study aims to develop Smarter Homes as a test bed for companies that develop products aimed at the target group under the working name "Smarter Homes as Test and Demonstration Arena"

A future project will contribute to the development of Dalarna University and the academic environment around Dalarna University's research profiles in the field of Health and Welfare, especially the research center for the elderly and aging (ReCALL), as it creates an environment in which networks and contacts are built,



which are of great importance for testing and testing the digital welfare technology of the future.

The project will include Dalarna County, and it is important to spread information about the possibilities with the test bed "Smarter home" throughout Dalarna

**Funding**

The project is to be funded with 1:1 funds and in the scope of North Middle Sweden's ERDF programme.

**Name of the organisation: Region Dalarna, Department for Regional Development**

**Name of Signatory: Elsmari Julin**

**Position: Director, Department for Regional Development**

**Date: 2021-09-06**

