

MOBIAGE: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ELDERLY EUROPEAN MIGRANTS

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Despite the commonly held belief that in the European Union migration is usually from less economically developed countries towards wealthier countries, there has been a steady increase in the number of elderly migrants who at retirement age prefer to settle down in Romania and Bulgaria. If the initial reason for their migration is opting for a more relaxed way of living and higher standard of living at a lower cost, they decide to make the move because of the opportunity to socialize in the local communities, participate in volunteering activities and take part in the local labor market. Despite the multiple opportunities that Bulgaria and Romania offer to Western-European Citizens, they are also faced with different obstacles such as the language barrier that can lead to difficulties in communicating with local authorities.

In this framework, the project “MOBIAGE - European Mobility Resource Centers for Active Aging of Elderly People Living Outside Their Country”, funded by the European Commission, aims to promote active ageing, mobility and social integration of people when moving to another European Member State. The project is managed by The International Management Institute (Bulgaria) - Founder of the International University College (IUC) and implemented in cooperation with the Liceul “Ovidius” (Romania), the College of Nyiregyhaza (Hungary), Consorzio FOR.COM. Formazione per la Comunicazione (Italy) and FIC (Denmark).

The MOBIAGE project intends to develop “European Resource Centers” devoted to helping elderly foreign citizens learn the language of their host country through an e-learning platform, familiarize themselves with local culture, customs/traditions, provide legal and administrative advice, and offer the opportunity to participate in voluntary initiatives, employment, thereby leading to better integration into the host countries/residence countries. Project beneficiaries can benefit from these services also through the MOBIAGE web portal. The e-learning platform is accessible through the project web site www.mobiage.net, where English speaking course participants can benefit from language courses in Bulgarian, Romanian, Hungarian and Italian.

Most migrants in smaller villages of Bulgaria or Romania take part in the local initiatives for the improvement of their everyday life.

A unique way for this age group to integrate into the social and cultural context of their local communities is by participating in social events. In fact, the European Mobility Resource Centers also provide social initiatives, such as the musical workshop “The End” Blues Band. “The End” Blues Band, comprises of The Bradley Family, Jessica de Heer, Alan Laurillard (a famous Dutch musician and composer) and Drago Tzukev, a language expert involved in the MOBIAGE project. The average age of “The End” Blues Band members is over 50. Interest in the band’s music has led to the organization of another music workshop for R&B addressed to the students of The International University College (Dobrich, Bulgaria).