

Courtmac Community Shop welcomes EU delegation

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An ageing population is a challenge faced by many global economies. Based on the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and European Commission figures, the number of those who are 65 and over is set to almost treble to 1.6 million people in the next 35 years in Ireland and, by 2060 one in three Europeans will be over 65.

Cork Institute of Technology (CIT), Hincks Centre for Entrepreneurship Excellence hosted a European partner meeting and conference on February 5 and 6. The Hincks Centre is exploring the value of this Silver Economy in the region, and across Europe, as part of a European Interreg co-funded project. The Silver Economy refers to the economic opportunities that arise from expenditure related to population ageing.

Headed by Dr Helen McGuirk, the Hincks Centre is one of nine European Union (EU) partners who will participate in the interregional meeting and conference. The EU delegation including representatives from France, Spain, Slovenia, Poland, Sweden and Portugal will visit Courtmacsherry as part of the two-day visit to Cork.

Courtmacsherry Community Shop Co-Operative was submitted as a Good Practice as part of a European Interreg project. This is an example of a community initiative supporting local micro enterprises operating in the Silver economy. The Good Practice is now published on the Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform, which is available to policymakers around Europe. An Interreg Europe expert who reviewed the Good Practice commented, "This community shop could be of great interest to policy makers and other communities seeking innovative solutions applicable to small rural areas."

The group will also visit Bandon to experience activities involved in their 'Age Friendly Town', a Cork County Council initiative.

Over the two days, Good Practices of SMEs supplying the Silver Economy will be presented from around Europe with the objective of aiding the design of regional action plans and influencing regional policies. Commenting on the event, the conference organiser and researcher at the Hincks Centre, Dr Aisling Conway-Lenihan, said she is looking forward to welcoming EU partners, policy makers, researchers and SMEs to CIT for a productive two days of engagement and collaboration. "We are delighted to bring our European partners to Courtmacsherry, as an example of a community coming together to combat rural decline."

