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Hincks Centre Collaboration with Cork County Council Gains European Recognition as Part of SilverSME Project

19 January, 2021



A collaboration between the [Hincks Centre for Entrepreneurship Excellence](#) at Munster Technological University and Cork County Council's Age Friendly Town programme has gained European recognition as a good practice as part of the SilverSME project.

The [SilverSME](#) project is funded by [Interreg Europe](#) and includes nine partners from Spain, France, Sweden, Portugal, Slovenia, Poland and Ireland (Hincks Centre). The duration of the two-phase project, launched in June 2018, is five years.



SILVER SMEs aims to improve the implementation and delivery of regional policies for SMEs competitiveness by building on significant opportunities arising from the Silver Economy. The Silver Economy can be defined as the economic opportunities arising from the public and consumer expenditure related to population ageing and the specific needs of those over 50.

An ageing population is a challenge faced by many global economies. According to figures from the CSO and European Commission respectively, 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.

As part of the outputs of the project, Hincks was required to work with SME's and policy-makers to identify relevant good practices in the Silver Economy in the Southern region of Ireland.

Dr Aisling ConwayLenihan, SilverSME project lead at the Hincks Centre collaborated with Noelle Desmond, [Age Friendly County Programme](#) manager at Cork City Council, to research and report on the good practice of the Cork County Council initiative, Age Friendly Town (AFT) programme.

The Cork County AFT programme, led by Cork County Council (CCC) is part of their Age Friendly Strategy 2016-2021. This is part of Ireland's national [Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme](#), which is included in [WHO Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities](#). Bandon, Mitchelstown, Kinsale and Cobh were chosen as pilot towns for the programme, with plans to expand the number of towns in 2021.

This programme supports enterprises through training delivered by Local Enterprise Offices. Age Friendly Ireland has also developed a toolkit for [Age Friendly Business Recognition](#) for SMEs who participate in the training. A voluntary AFT committee in each town manages the funding (€5,000) in consultation with CCC.

As part of the training, local enterprises are informed about the size and potential of the Silver Economy, accessibility of premises, advised on large font size on menus and chairs with armrests for older persons. Following the completion of training, enterprises sign up to an Age Friendly Charter.

In early February 2020, the Hincks Centre hosted an international workshop and study visit for the SilverSME project partners over two days. Partners were taken to Bandon, one of the four Age Friendly Towns to visit local enterprises who participated in the project and to meet members of the voluntary AFT committee.

The EU partners were impressed by the welcome and passion of the enterprises and AFT committee members who developed and promoted the Age Friendly programme voluntarily. The AFT programme is now accepted as a good practice for the SilverSME project and is published on the [Interreg Policy Learning Platform](#). Not all good practices are published on this platform and this is an indication of the quality of the programme and its ability to be replicated across other EU regions.

Commenting on the two-day event, Dr Aisling ConwayLenihan said, "I was delighted to showcase this excellent example of SMEs and Policy Makers working together in providing tailored goods and services for older people to our EU partners".



SilverSME project partners pictured at the international workshop and study visit hosted by the Hincks Centre for Entrepreneurship Excellence in February 2020