



# Best practice wanted

## Subproject 6: *Networks*

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# 1 Introduction

Our Life as Elderly has through the sub-project “Network” been focusing on the conditions of pre health service and the importance of social, cultural, professional and personal networks for elderly people, and how to meet the future wishes and demands. In the questionnaires and interviews that have been carried out in the project we have had to some extent a common strategy in all participating countries with similar questions to our respondents, though special local/regional different activities has also been carried out. This to enable us to make a comparison analyze of elderly peoples view of their social networks and the importance of networking.

## 1.1 Background

In working for sustainable growth in regions and municipalities in the Northern Periphery there has to be equal attention to several perspectives. A strive for strong economic growth as well as promoting equality, improved welfare and a better environment. An improved welfare is a factor that contributes both directly and indirectly to sustainable growth. Indirectly as community, with a wider public awareness, and from a national perspective as a role model. Directly as increased attraction drives economic growth. Improved welfare and access to health care for our elderly is a priority in this area.

The northern periphery societies, like many other central European societies, is facing one of the greatest challenges in modern time, to meet the relative expanding population of elderly and fewer for their support.

These are examples of issues that stand as key factors as how to live and will live in the future. The municipality of Luleå has through the previous citizen dialogue initiative “Lule Paradiso” gained a broad awareness of their citizens future needs of better care and health service for elderly. The results from this initiative did amongst other things identify areas of importance, which later led to be the sub projects in “Our Life as Elderly”

Through an interactive and continuous dialogue with the citizens in each partner municipalities, future needs, wishes and requirements for the care of elderly will be looked upon in a perspective of 10-15 years.

Based on this dialogue, specifically for above-mentioned sub project, the results will lead to suggestions for improvements and community development initiatives for elderly social networks. A better social networking for/by our elderly aims not only to meet the challenge as such, but also to enhance our competitive edge as sparsely populated regions and to attract people to move to these areas.

## 1.2 Problem formulation and concerns

How shall the growing number of retirees get a good and meaningful life? Our society’s resources might not be sufficient to facilitate adequate care and health services for them.

This challenge is specifically present in the Northern Periphery regions due to a number of facts. One is the same as the trends in the rest of Europe; larger centers of population will

grow at the expense of surrounding rural areas. A part of this trend is a result of inequalities in service in rural - urban areas. The inequalities do not encourage people to live and stay in peripheral and sparsely populated areas. Which increases the problem many folds.

To ensure these people a good quality of life, the society has to ensure a certain quality of health care and services. There are also many advantages in small communities, notably in the natural, cultural and human resources.

Even though the majority of people has a positive view of the modern society as for technical progress, industrial developments, new medicine and better housing, alienation has come to be a major trend in modern society.

### **1.3 Disposition**

This report will firstly give information about the transnational interviews that has been conducted with persons in and around Luleå and from our partner countries and the outcome of these. Secondly the results from the trans national and national questionnaire are presented. In the end of this report there will be a summary of the results and a final discussion around the subject Networks and how people would like to live as elderly.

### **1.4 Definitions**

In this report the sub project “Network” has only dealt with our citizen’s view of their social networks and their importance. There has been no deeper analysis done on technical networking, broadband and/or issues regarding to infrastructure.

## **2 Purpose and target orientations**

The purpose of this phase has been to determine elderly persons view on their personal networks and the importance of these.

This sub project’s target orientation has been to get to know elderly peoples thoughts and wishes for social contacts and personal networking. This will help the project to formulate creative tools to our politicians and hopefully create a foundation for next generation’s elderly care in all participating communities.

## **3 Methods**

In this citizen dialogue we have used two types of methods, interviews and closed questionnaires.

### **3.1 Line of action Luleå**

Individual interviews have been conducted with 12 persons in the ages of 55-65 during April-May, equally divided in women/men and living conditions, rural/central areas.

**The** selection of interviewees has been done through a “snowball” method i.e. the project leader ask one known person within the above mentioned criteria, this person has then suggested next person and so on. The interviewees have then had a choice of place for these sessions to be held either in their homes or at the project leaders office. Two project leaders were present at each interview and the interview was taped. .

Group Interviews has been done with focus groups during the same time, April-May 2005. The groups were the project reference group, a group of immigrants, and a senior group. Representatives from, the Social administration, pensioner organizations, primary school and the pharmacy is in the project reference group. In the interview 6 persons participated from the reference group. In the groups of immigrants were persons from Iraq, Finland, Bengal and Mexico represented, all in all 4 persons. The senior group was populated with representatives from the biggest pensioner organizations in Luleå. At each group interview, two to four project leaders were present in each session. The interviewees responded to the questions freely and from their own interest and experience. These interviews were also taped.

#### Transnational Questionnaire

A transnational questionnaire designed and used by each country participating in the report of Network. This has been sent out to 200 respondents in the ages of 55-65 equally divided in gender and area.

### **3.2 Line of action Bodö**

**Individual interviews** have been conducted with 12 persons in the ages 55-65 during May and June 2005. The selection was equally divided in women / men , and living conditions rural/ central areas.

The selection of interviews has been done through a “selective selection”, by some known and some unknown persons, in different environment in our municipality.

The interviews have been held in meeting rooms in the public buildings. Two subproject leaders were present at each interview, and the interview was recorded. After recording it was written down, all what was said.

**Dialog groups** have been conducted during May to October 2005. Nine different target groups.

The groups have been politicians, relatives to dementia, youth, employed, volunteer organizations, educations system- different levels, elderly people with public service today, health workers different professions, inhabitants with foreign background.

The dialog meetings have had a mal to discuss the future challenges, related to each subproject. It has been written notes from the meetings. The meetings have been held in different parts of the public buildings.

**Questionnaire** sent out to a random sample of 200 men /women age 55 – 65. The selection was done from address list of the inhabitants in this age group. October 2005. Trans-national part.

### **3.3 Line of action the Faroe Islands**

#### **Individual interviews**

Individual interviews have been conducted with 11 person in the ages of 55 – 65, in the period from 6 of May to 20 of May. Interviews were made with four men and seven women. Four of the interviews were made in the municipality of Vestmanna. Vestmanna Municipality is one community with a population of 1.239 (des 2004). In a Faroese context, Vestmanna is considered a central area.

Seven interviews were made in the municipality of Sunda, pop. 1.534 (des 2004). The municipality is a merger between 6 municipalities in January 2005. Even though several of the communities today have grown together through population growth, you still consider yourself as part of the original community. Sunda is a municipality consisting of ten communities, the two most rural communities with a population fewer than 50. All seven interviews were made in communities with a population fewer than one hundred.

The interviewed persons were randomly selected from address list of the inhabitants in this age group in the respective municipality.

Nine of the interviews were held in the informant's home, and two at the project leader's office. The interviews were held by the project leader, and the interviews were taped.

#### **Group discussions**

Discussions with dialog groups were conducted in september – oktober. With the National Pensioners Organisation we discussed general issues, also in comparison with the other Nordic countries.

With the local Pensioners Organisations in Vestmanna and Sunda, the discussion was more specific, like transport to activities. In Sunda, a survey among the 30 pensioners at the meeting showed, that only 3 (all men), were familiar with using the Internet and e-mail as a form of communication.

Discussion on elderly service with politicians from both municipalities on local issues, and in general with reference group.

The theme for the dialog has been to discuss how future elderly service in Faroe Island can be organised. Also to discuss more local or specific problems in the elderly service today.

#### **Questionnaire**

87 people in Vestmanna Municipality and 113 in Sunda Municipality received the questionnaire (proportional to population). Persons were randomly selected from address lists of the inhabitants in this age group in the respective municipality.

The questionnaire was sent out in June 2005. 26 % answered our questionnaire.

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Interviews of persons/groups in Luleå

When processing and reading through the material from the interviews the following four headings, as described below, have been seen as important subjects. These subjects have throughout the report rather, than the questions themselves, been used to highlight the findings.

#### 4.1.1 Your current social well being when you get older

To maintain the current social well being when getting older the interviewees pointed out the necessity of being active, as long as you are well and fit, in building networks, to develop new contacts. The interviewees also pointed out the importance of keeping your contacts near you and to participate in society in a way that your social and mental health won't deteriorate. To send post cards and make phone calls on regular bases is a good way to keep your contacts active. Some of the interviewees also mentioned that it is important to realize that you might have more time to nourish your network when you stop working, it is important to keep your old friends. To develop interests, join clubs or get a hobby would be a good way to maintain your social well-being said some of the interviewees.

*"-I believe in this with many contacts. One way is to develop one's network when one is well and to try and keep this when getting older. I think that one must be conscious and to have people around you while you can."*

*"- Well, I expect from myself, because one has nothing like this for free, as long as I have my brain intact find my interests, and to explore."*

*"- I believe that my network will increase. When I stop working I will have more time for my network. It is important to keep your old friends, in any case you need to work actively with your contacts or else they disappears."*

#### 4.1.2 Family, neighbors, friends or associations as support when getting older

The married spouse is the person that most of the interviewees regard as the main support and help but also brothers and sisters are important. As for their own children the situation is somewhat different, no one wants them to feel the pressure that they have felt in tending for their parents. In most cases children do not live in the same area as their parents which makes it hard to expect practical help and support. Many interviewees want their children to concentrate on their own life. When it comes to the expectations on friends and neighbors there is a general perception that as long as you are active yourself towards these groups you can count on their support as well.

*"Well, he who sits in the armchair, I have great expectations on "*

*" Help with what? I have low expectations. I have never lived that kind of life that I expect others to make my life"*

*"I have as much expectations on friends as my family, many small streams.."*

#### **4.1.3 Active social networks other than family relations to keep your independence, as you grow old.**

Most of the interviewees think that an active social network other than family is of great importance to maintain their independence as elderly. It is through these informal networks such as special interest groups and hobby groups that one can get out and meet other people. If you don't have friends and an active social life you might be confined to your apartment or house and not meet new people. Associations/clubs that has activities is important as it is through these organizations new contacts are made. Many interviewees also regarded IT, as a tool, to be important for to be active outside the family, as one said, -*"yes and it is also fun"*

*"yes I think it is rather important. I think it is interesting to meet other people. To associate with other people. Clubs and organizations too."*

*"That's the most important. My own initiative whatever happens outside family, something that I have. That's the way I live my life."*

#### **4.1.4 Physical conditions as an important factor in keeping your social well being as elderly**

Many of the interviewees thought that it is of great importance to be in strong physical condition in order to maintain your independence as elderly. If you have that you can do things without being dependent on others, to depend on someone can be a restriction. There was however interviewees that from own experience pointed out that as long as there were aids provided to them they could in many cases function just as well as others, but there is a need to make these aids available. Even if it in some cases does limit you one has to try and find new ways of doing things. As one respondent said, -nothing is impossible, a physical handicap is only a hindrance but it does not stop you from doing things totally.

*"Then you can both do things and participate on a totally different way without being dependent on others. To be dependent can limit you."*

*"If you can get aid you can still function so. It will though limit your ability but one can always find new ways somehow"*

*"Well, one constantly sees examples of those that has a physical handicap can manage very well, it is of cause depending of your ambitions"*

## **4.2 Interviews of persons/groups in Bodö**

### **4.2.1 Your current social well being when you get older**

In the same way as Sweden a lot of the respondents pointed out that if you want to maintain current social well being when getting older you need to be active yourself. Some of them also pointed out, that if you loose some parts of your network, it will be possible to gain some others. A few of the respondents pointed out that they don't expect the network to be smaller when they get older. One of them even said *"I am meeting new people all the time, therefore my network possible will increase when I get older"*.

*"I believe I will loose something, but it is possible to get new contacts"*

*"I have a lot of friends, and I really look forward to have them as a part of my network when I get older."*

*"I expect to maintain my the social security that I have today"*

*"Friends will be the most important network in the future".*

### **4.2.2 Family, neighbors, friends or associations as support when getting older.**

Most of the respondents don't expect so much support from their family when the get older. The family is important, but as the in may cases they don't live in the same area as they parents. Besides, some of the respondents are very aware that their children and grandchildren have to take care of they own life. When it comes to neighbours and friends, they are hoping for some kind of help, but not so much. They expect nothing from their trade union. A man, pensioner, from rural areas said *" I didn't get any help from my trade union, even when I was working"*.

*" If someone wants to give me some help at all when I get older, I will be satisfied".*

*"My brothers, sisters and friends are enough for me, I don't need something more".*

*"I believe my family will support me when I get older, but if something happens I must rely on public services".*

#### **4.2.3 Active social networks other than family relations to keep your independence, as you grow old.**

It seems to be important for most of the respondents that another social network than the family is crucial when you get older. They believe that especially friends and next to that neighbours are of great importance.

*“Neighbours and friends are of great importance to maintain an independent life”.*

*“.....and I also expect some help from clubs and different organizations”.*

IT is not so important for the participants, and just a few of them believe IT is important to keep their independence when they get old.

*“IT is useful and interesting, but it is not crucial for a good life”.*

*“IT means nothing”*

*“When it comes to IT I have nothing to say”.*

*“I don’t know so much about IT, but maybe I will learn it when I get older”.*

*“IT is not out of the questions, but I have to think about it”.*

#### **4.2.4 Physical conditions as an important factor in keeping your social well being as elderly**

Everybody agreed upon this statement: A good and strong physical health is very important to maintain an independent life. They have some different opinions about whether they will need any support on this matter:

*“ I don’t need anybody to take care of my physical health, that is my own responsibility”.*

Some others said:

*“ I am positive to the fact that others than myself can give me a hand with my physical health”.*

### 4.3 Interviews of persons/groups in the Faroe Islands

#### 4.3.1 Your current social well being when you get older

All interviewees except one thought they had an active social network, besides their family network. All interviewees expected this network to maintain or even increase when reaching pensioners age.

None of the interviewees were fearing loneliness or isolation when reaching pensioners age. Some mentioned activities they would like to start after leaving work.

*“ I would like to take evening classes, i want to learn languages” (Female)*

*“ I will enjoy it, more time for fishing, keeping the sheep and the goose. (Male)*

Several of the interviewees mentioned more time for grandchildren, especially those who had children living in other part of the country or abroad.

#### 4.3.2 Family, neighbors, friends or associations as support when getting older.

The expectation for support can be divided into two main groups.

If you are in need of personal care, none of interviewees wants help from other than the public home care service.

*“ My children shall not have the burden of taken care of me when I am in need of care. It is not the responsibility of your children”*

On the other hand almost everyone expect help with practical things, speaking of painting the house, gardening etc.

#### 4.3.3 Active social networks other than family relations to keep your independence, as you grow old.

There seem to be many private, active, old and very stable friendships. In Vestmanna in particular, “knitting clubs” are common:

*“We have had a knitting club for 31 years, and it is the same one, we meet every second week”*

But also activities including couples are old and stable.

*“ We are 4 couples that meet to play cards, dine together, etc.; we have done this for a very long time”*

There are also more formal gatherings, where village people come together, for social activities. These can be held in the village hall:

*“We meet there every Monday, the men play cards and the women bring their knitting”.*

or in the parish hall:

*“ We have meetings at least twice a week, Sundays and Wednesdays. We also travel to meetings in other parts of the country....., I would say that our social life is very much in the community”.*

But people in a village or a region are also mutually dependent on each other when it comes to keeping sheep (slaughtering, medicating etc.):

*“We (the men in the village) have to be together in activities like these.”*

Whether for birthdays, weddings or funerals:

*“We get in contact, and we agree on who does what; but it is almost the same every time, I think I always bake the same cake, no one has to ask, everyone knows what to do”.*

*“There is also bad luck and misery among some of us, but I think we are good at taking care of each other, listening, comforting each other”.*

These are the networks which seems to be very important for people, and are the main reason why people want to stay in the local area even they grow old, and could expect better service for elderly in a more central area.

#### **4.3.4 Physical conditions as an important factor in keeping your social well being as elderly.**

Everyone agreed that it is important to be in strong physical condition when you get elderly. One of the main reason is that many of the houses are not fit for physical handicap. ( See housing)

Many of the social activity also depends on mobility.

*“You have to have the ability to move around easily”*

*“But i expect help from my children” speaking of help to shopping, painting house etc.*

##### **Activity,**

##### **Males**

Most of the interviewees have either a fishing boat or/and sheep. Only one interviewee was not interested fishing or keeping sheep.

##### **Females**

Five of seven interviewees were active in knitting clubs. Four of seven interviewees played bingo on a regular basis.

Other activities male and female

Walking

Playing cards

Painting

Chorus

Evening course/evening classes

Dance and feast

Sport

IT

### **Only four of eleven interviewees used IT**

None of the interviewees are afraid of loneliness when they grow old, but some mentioned:

*“It depends on your health situation....., Of course if I am bedridden, I don’t think I would be so interesting to visit”.*

## **4.4 Trans national summary of Interviews**

- **Your current social well being when you get older**

When it comes to current well being when people get older there is a common understanding learned from all the different interviews that meeting people and to be active in society is very important. Many interviewees from both Bodö and Luleå do not expect their network to decrease when they get older and in the Faroe Islands nearly all thought that they had an active social network. A general perception is that you get more time to maintain your old network and to meet new when you become pensioner.

- **Family, neighbors, friends or associations as support when getting older.**

Family, neighbors and friends have a great impact in people’s life but the roles are different. Family is an important factor but is not the primary care giver for an elderly person, the expectations on family is very low for all interviewees regardless of cultural or nationality background. In many cases children in both Bodö and Luleå do not live in the same area and therefore not accessible in a care situation.

- **Active social networks other than family relations to keep your independence, as you grow old.**

An active social network other than family is very important for everyone regardless of nationality. In the Faroe Islands there seems to be many private, active old and very stable friendships due to a mutual dependency in different situations such as farming and fishing. In Luleå and Bodö friends play more of a role for free time activities and a way to meet other people. There are also more formal gatherings in the Faroe Islands, where village people come together for social activities.

- **Physical conditions as an important factor in keeping your social well being as elderly.**

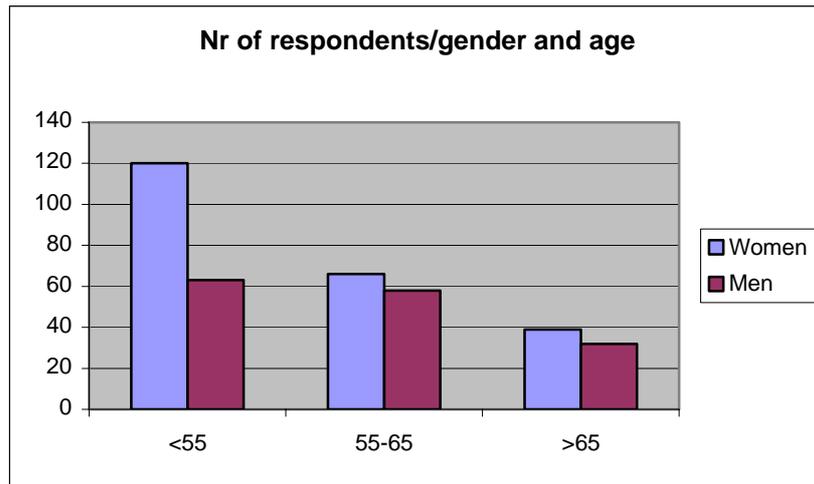
There is no difference between the project partners that it is of great importance to be in strong physical condition in order to maintain your independence as elderly. In some cases though it is also a question of what aids you can be supported with. Some people also mentioned that a weak physical condition might be a hindrance but not exclude you from having a social well being.

## 5 Questionnaires

### 5.1 LULEÅ, SWEDEN

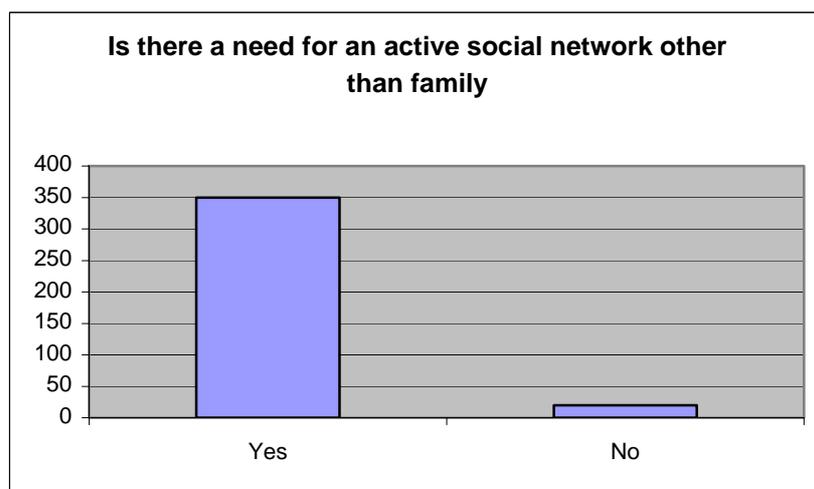
#### 5.1.1 Questionnaire presented at the exhibition “bomässan” Luleå

At our stand at the exhibition “home” in Luleå the 29<sup>th</sup> of April to the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2005. a citizen dialogue was carried by the means of a questionnaire to people in the ages 55 and older.



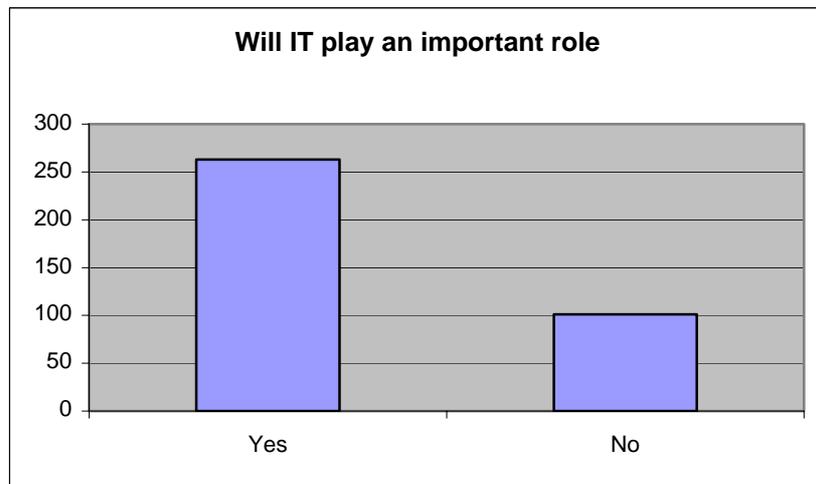
In total 378 persons answered our questionnaire

On our question if an active social network other than family relations is needed to secure independence as elderly, 93,33% of the respondents regarded this as an important detail.



5.3 % did not find this necessary

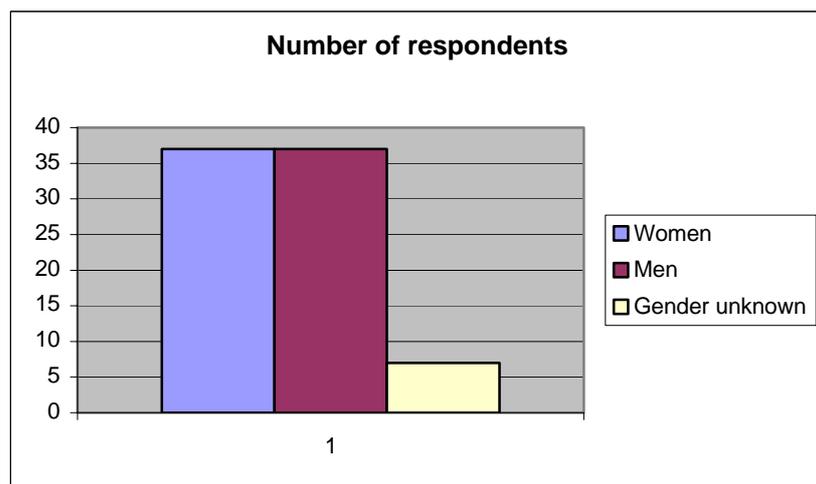
On our question whether IT would play an important role as a tool to be able to maintain their social contacts when getting old, 71% of the respondents said yes that they thought this was true.



27 % thought that IT would not change their ways and methods in keeping their social contacts.

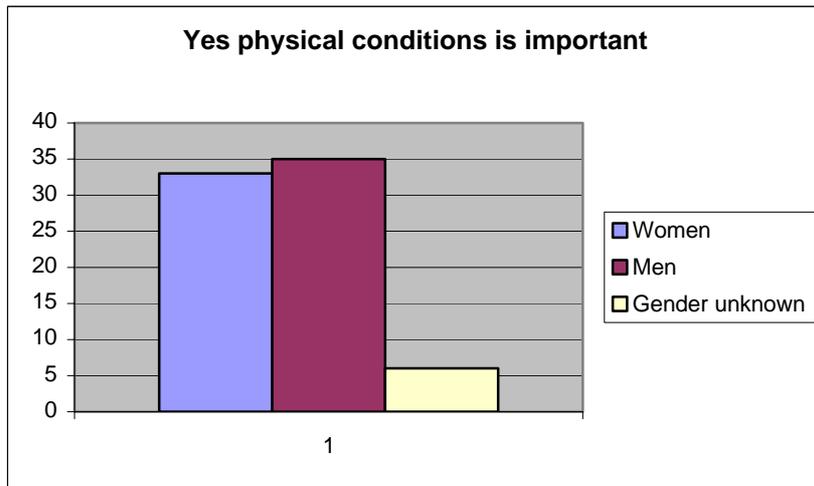
### 5.1.2 Questionnaires sent out by post to people in Luleå

As a part of our transnational cooperation it was decided on a meeting on the Faroe Islands that we should send out a similar questionnaire to 200 persons in the ages 55-65 years in each country, Scotland and Finland excluded.



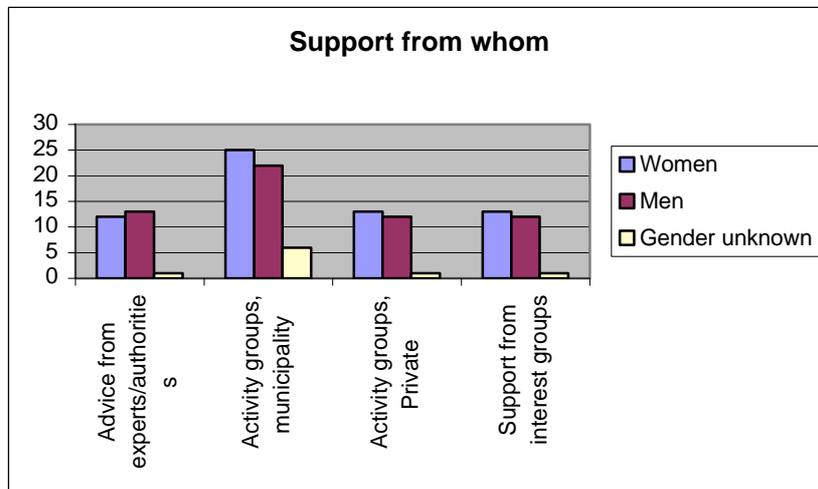
40.5 % answered our questions

On our question whether physical conditions is important to secure their independence as elderly, 91.4% of the respondents answered yes.



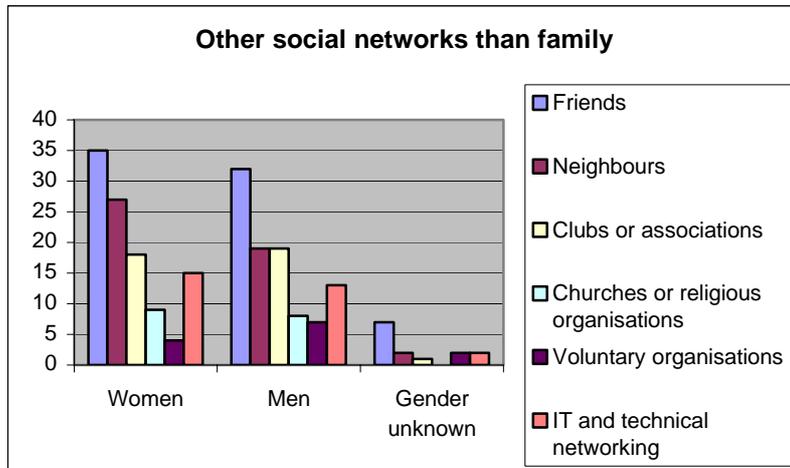
5% of the respondents did not think that physical conditions were important, 3 persons did not respond to this question..

If they needed support from anyone else to maintain their physical condition, whom would they prefer to provide this support, 65,4% of the respondents thought that the municipality should be responsible for this.



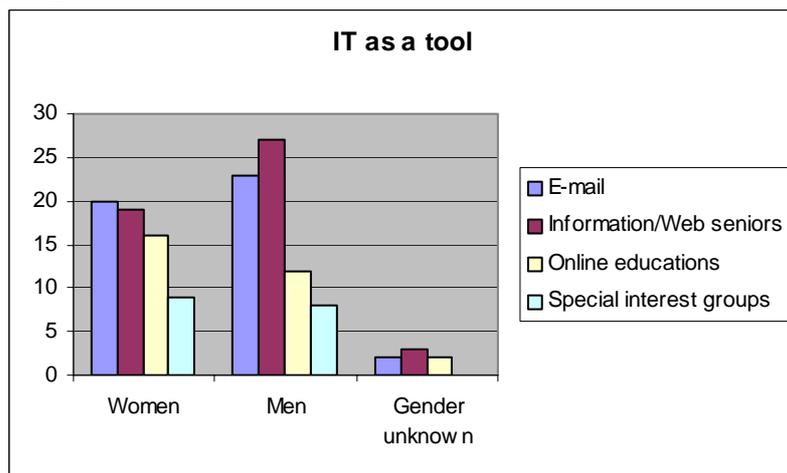
**Comments from respondents:** Don't know. This I have to manage myself. All positive initiatives are good we all need to do whatever we can.

On our question which other social networks other than relations is needed to secure ones independence as elderly 91.4% of the respondents regarded friends that you had bonded with over the years as being the most important network.



To note from this survey is that a majority of those that saw IT as a helpful tool were women.

To follow up the above question we also wanted to know in what way and what kind of IT services the respondents thought would be of interest as tool in their independence. E-mail and web pages with information and contacts for seniors was what they regarded as useful.



Other: I'm not that fond of IT; Traveling

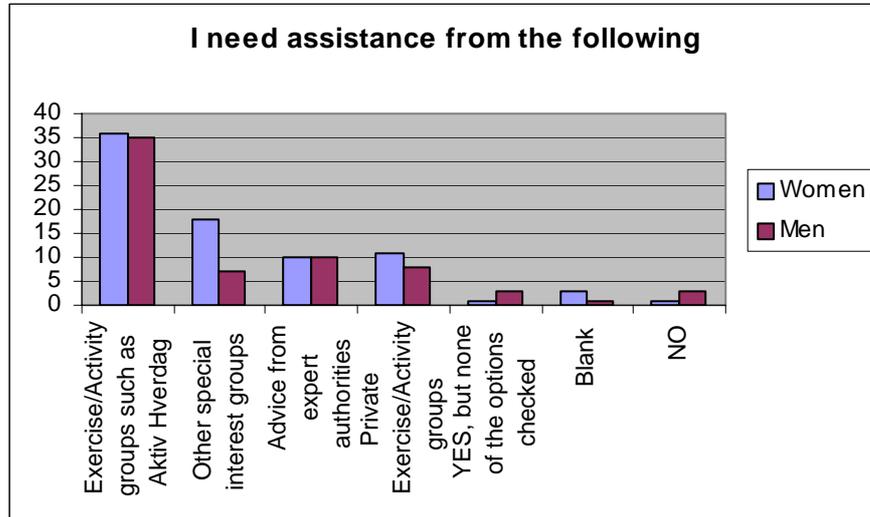
**Comments from respondents**

We are all depending on each other disregarding age. IT is an easy tool as for keeping in contact with your children living else ware, gives you intellectual stimuli.

## 5.2 BODØ NORWAY

### 5.2.1 Questionnaires sent out by post to people in Bodö

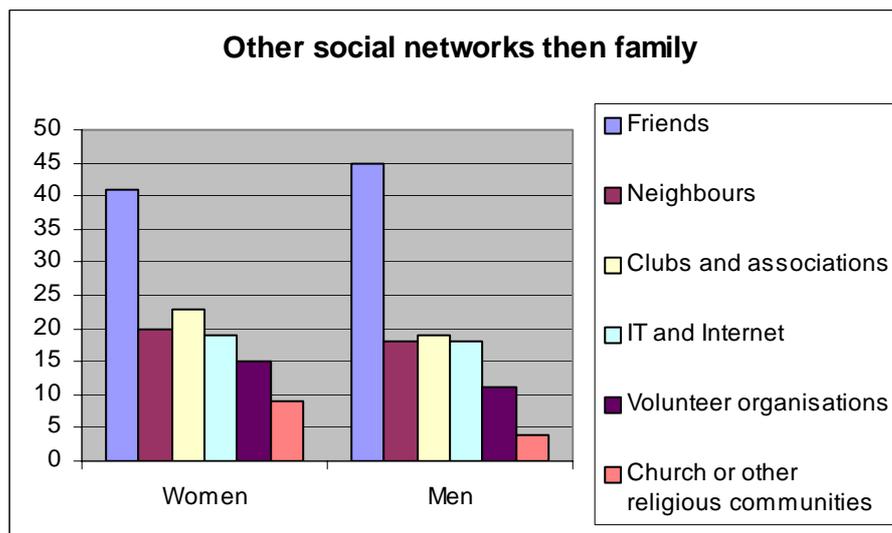
1. Do you think that an active social network outside the family is important in order to ensure an independent life as an old person? Yes, but in order to maintain my physical health, I need assistance from the following:



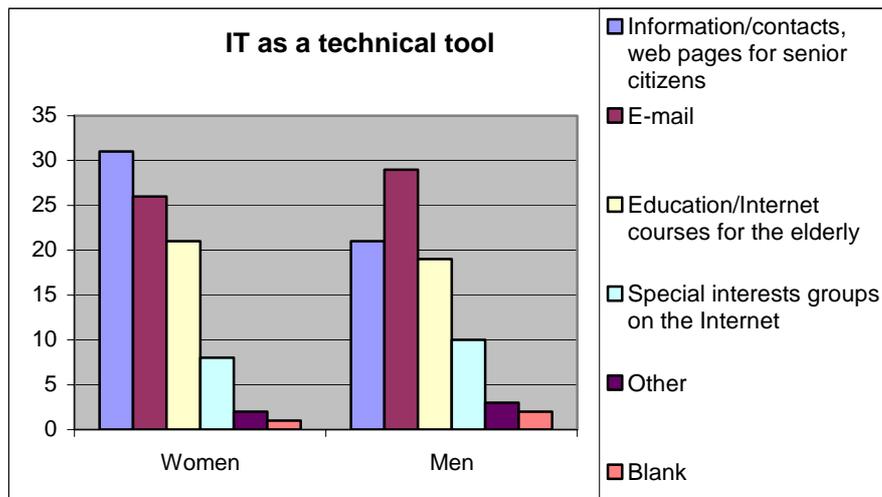
**No Women:** Am dependent on outside help. Will need help from the outside if I suffer from dementia.

**Men:** Feel no need for outside proselytising.

### 2. What social networks other than family and relatives are needed to secure your independent living as an elderly?



**In what way do you think IT may be a useful technical tool?**



**Other:**

Women: IT is a system. It can never replace human physical contact. Photo manager. Access to IT problem solvers. IT is very impersonal. Old people need personal contact. Close contact.

Men: Internet banking (x2). Support person/assistant. It's important to use the Internet since that is where more and more services can be found.

## 5.3 FØROYA KOMMUNUFELAG

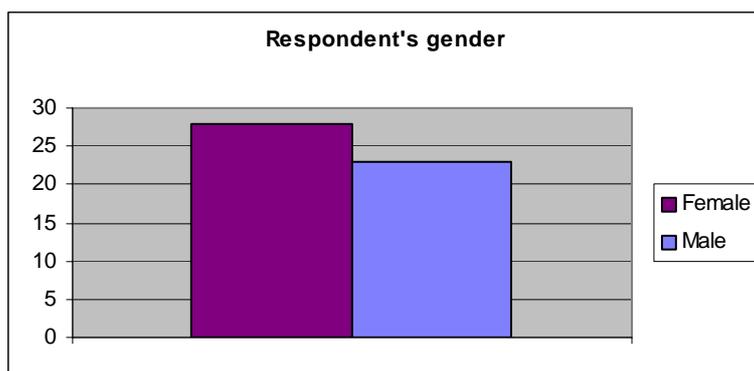
### 5.3.1 Questionnaires sent out by post to people in the Faroe Islands

87 people in Vestmanna Municipality and 113 in Sunda Municipality received the questionnaire.

#### Characteristics

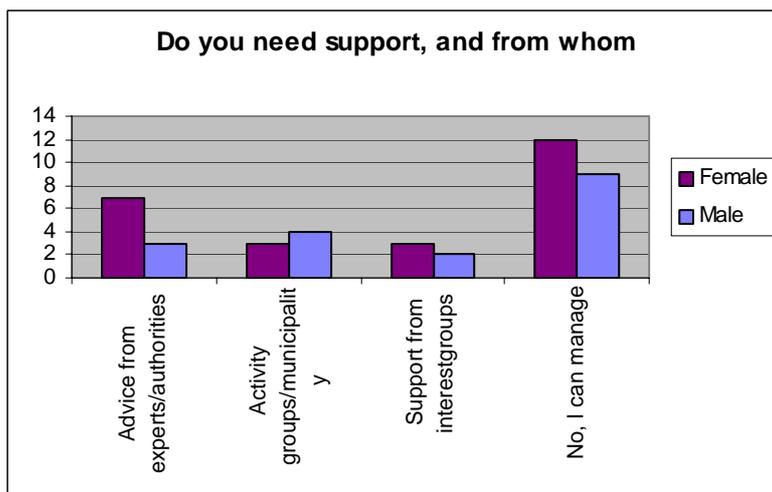
Vestmanna Municipality is one community with a population of 1.239 (des 2004).

Sunda is a municipality consisting of 10 communities, the two most rural communities with a population under 50. Total population of 1.534 (des 2004). The municipality is a merger between 6 municipalities in January 2005. Even though several of the communities today have grown together through population growth, you still consider yourself as part of the original community.



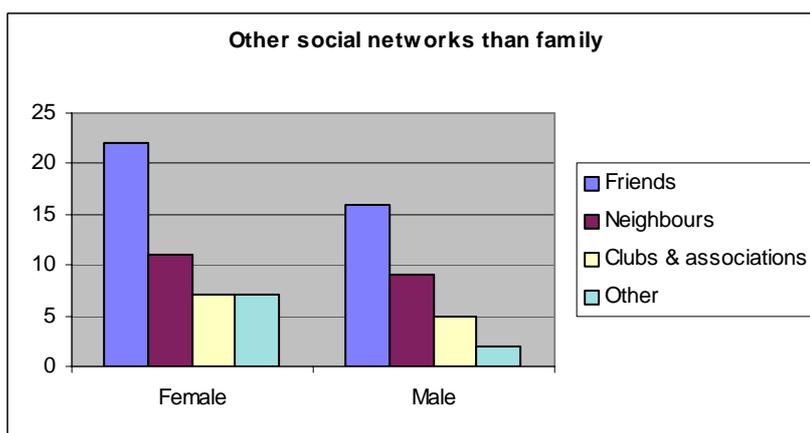
25,5 % responded to the questionnaire

On the question “do you need support from others to maintain good health”, 51% answered positive, while 48% answered no. Most respondent’s think they manage on their own. 12 persons did not respond to this the question.



**Comments from respondents:** I can manage on my own; I know what I need to do to stay healthy.

On the question “which other social networks other than family and relations are important to you” 74,5% regarded friends as being the most important network.



### National questions

In the Faroese national part of the questionnaire respondents gave this information:

Cross table	Are you afraid of loneliness when elderly?			
	No answer	Yes	No	Total
<b>Do you have satisfactory network today?</b>				
No answer	3			3
<b>Yes</b>	3	4	33	40
<b>No</b>		3	5	8
Total	6	7	38	51

## 6 Discussions

Family has a big role to play in social networking even though parents of today don't want their children to feel the same pressure they felt in caring for their parents. The fact that children shall manage their own situation firsthand, regardless of social and cultural background is from my point of view every parent wish. There is nothing strange about this. Most all elderly thinks that it is OK that children help out with shopping, window cleaning and practical things, but none wants to become a burden for their children. There might be a fear among elderly that if the demands on their children increase they will get fed up and stop visiting. Many of the interviewees says that they find it hard to ask their children for help, "*they have their own things*", but deep inside children knows that they are supposed to help their parents when that day comes and they are in need.

Friends have in most cases been there over a number of years, from early teens to old age and therefore do play an important role with shared experience and phases in life. Mostly everyone has a need for a life outside family that is ones owns, this does not change because you grow older, you still might not want to share all thoughts and feelings with your family. Another reason why friends and neighbors are so important is because they in most cases also share the same phase in life and can understand what you go through. Good friends and neighbors have an influence in well being, friends have always time for each other. Though as in all situations in life it's up to each individual how they would like their old aging to be, there are those that feel good with only a small social network and with only little engagement and those that needs big social networks and great engagement.

To use IT as tool and resource for finding new friends and to be active in society is more and more common in Sweden than in Norway and Faroe Islands. There is though a slightly difference between men and women how they use IT in Sweden, women is in fact more positive to IT then men. Women would more frequently educate themselves, join and be active in special interest groups then men. This is reflecting on the women's wish to belong to a bigger social network and in their social engagement. They have a greater need for friends and neighbors than men. The men on the other hand brows the Internet for information and use e-mail more frequently than women, associations and clubs are more important for men.

For those that are in a situation of transition, whether it is in career change, leaving work to become pensioner or experience ones children moving out and start their own family, social networks are of great importance. To guarantee improved quality of life for elderly our society might need to create basic conditions for network generations in greater extent than today. Life itself is about transitions, when you are young your world extends as your ability increase, when you get older the transition is reverse and your ability decrease.

The transition from being an independent individual to become a person in need of care is a tuff process. There is a need for creativity, informal meeting places and

cultural activities in society to meet and smoothen these transitions for elderly people. In this regard, the 'care potential' is critical: the availability and ability of people to care for their relatives.

Research on care patterns suggests that what really matters is the presence of spouses (de facto the main caregivers of elderly people) and of daughters and sisters (De Jong Gierveld 1998). Willingness to care of course also comes into question and here what seems to matter (in terms of the next generation's willingness to care) is the quality of the relationship between parents and children.

The positive thing is that most of the interviewees are prepared to be innovative and find solutions when they come in the situation of need of care, that they are not afraid of changes. Many of tomorrow's elderly might have their own resources or private insurance that can be utilized for care, which in some extent also might create more caregivers through private initiatives. The most important task for society is to support the individual so they can act and find ways to live a good life as elderly. Recent research by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Alber and Fahey 2004; Alber and Köhler 2004) shows that about 4 out of 5 people across the EU-25 would consider it a good thing to strengthen family responsibility in looking after elderly persons.