

## European foundations provide innovative solutions to age-old problem

**Brussels, 30 September 2011 – Finding innovative solutions to the growing ageing demographic in Europe is a key objective of many public-benefit foundations. To coincide with the upcoming UN International Day of Older persons on 1 October and in anticipation of 2012 as the European Year for Active Ageing, the EFC is highlighting initiatives of its members - some of which are the leading foundations in Europe - to support elderly citizens. From promoting and encouraging active citizenship to providing palliative care and social assistance, European foundations are finding myriad innovative ways to get involved in a field of increasing importance for the future of the EU.**

With Europeans today living longer and healthier lives than ever before, and life expectancy continually on the increase, an ageing Europe raises a number of complicated issues. From 2012 the European working-age population will start to shrink, while the population aged over 60 will continue to increase by about two million people a year. According to the UN, average life expectancy at birth has increased by 20 years since 1950 to 66 years and is expected to extend a further 10 years by 2050<sup>1</sup>.

These demographic changes will not only increase pressure on government budgets and pensions systems, they will also place a growing number of elderly persons at risk of isolation, social exclusion and in need of social care. Recently the EFC has seen increased interest in the issue amongst its members, and anticipates that this will continue in the run up to and during the European Year 2012. One in five EFC members are currently involved in supporting social and human services in general, while 34 members have specific programmes targeting elderly persons. A selection of innovative initiatives by EFC members in this field is available below.



FUNDAÇÃO CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN **Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Portugal)**

**IntergenerationAll** - During 2010/2011 the foundation is supporting 18 pilot projects, 11 in the UK and 7 in Portugal, to plan, test and implement ideas for new intergenerational activities addressing isolation and loneliness, migration and the environment. The project aims to ascertain

a clearer picture of which types of initiatives lead to sustainable, engaging, cross-generational relationships that will strengthen communities and foster social cohesion. [Read more](#)



### Fundación 'la Caixa' (Spain)

**CiberCaixa centres** - This initiative, which in 2010 included 529 CiberCaixa centres, opens the door of elderly persons to the world of computers and the internet. La Caixa also runs conferences and a broad range of courses that include classes on gym, yoga, healthy living, digital photography or English, reading workshops, memory games and a film forum. Last year, over 700,000 older people took part in Fundación 'la Caixa' activities. [Read more](#)



### Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di San Miniato (Italy)

**Ithaca Project** - Named after Ulysses' homeland to which he longed to return, the Ithaca project helps elderly people to end their own journey in the place they love, and where they have their belongings and their roots. The initiative also provides assistance to their families and trains sanitary assistants who pay daily home visits to ensure their quality of life. 'Companions', a photograph of the project, won the 2011 EFC Photo Competition. [Read more](#)



### The Atlantic Philanthropies (Ireland)

**A2B (Access to Benefits)** - A2B is a non-profit company limited by guarantee, commissioned into existence by the Atlantic Philanthropies in 2007 to develop and deploy inventive new ways of improving benefit uptake in Northern Ireland. The project has been very successful in Northern Ireland, to date helping people over 60 to access previously unclaimed benefits worth £42.5m, using web-based technology supported by training and community development measures. [Read more](#)

For more information:

[Visit the EFC page on the European Year 2012](#)

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## NOTES TO EDITORS

### **About the EFC**

The European Foundation Centre (EFC), founded in 1989, is an association representing more than 230 public-benefit foundations and corporate funders active in philanthropy in Europe and beyond. The EFC develops and pursues activities in line with its objectives: creating an enabling legal and fiscal environment for foundations; documenting the foundation landscape; strengthening the infrastructure of the foundation sector; and promoting collaboration, both among foundations and between foundations and other actors, to advance the public good in Europe and beyond.

[www.efc.be](http://www.efc.be)

### **About foundations in Europe**

It is estimated that there are some 110,000 foundations in Europe, collectively spending between 83 and 150 billion euros annually on projects and programmes, and providing employment to up to one million Europeans. Foundations come in many shapes and sizes, with some offering grants while others prefer to operate their own programmes. In towns, cities, regions and countries across Europe, they can be found running or funding hospitals and universities; protecting historic buildings, promoting cultural activities, stimulating economic development and employment, supporting scientific excellence, advancing civil and human rights, engaging in environmental conservation, and much, much more.

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<sup>i</sup> See <http://www.un.org/en/events/olderpersonsday/background.shtml>