

*A stream of cooperation.*

## D-CARE LABS IN A FEW WORDS...

Before the COVID-19 pandemic started fundamental needs of home care beneficiaries were already not satisfied by current social service providers in the Danube Region. In addition, for the last several years, informal care by relatives has been shrinking because of increasing labour mobility and changing family models.

In several Central and Eastern European countries even essential services are often not provided. As a result of the pandemic the gaps and defects of national social service systems are becoming more obvious. Financial restrictions and lack of professional staff are major challenges.

Nowadays, care professionals are reaching the limits of their capacity. At the same time, home care beneficiaries need even more social care and social inclusion.

Since COVID-19 is extremely dangerous for vulnerable groups, especially older people choose to stay isolated in their homes because they fear infection. Loneliness does have a serious impact on psychological but also on physical state of a person.

Unexploited digital applications such as virtual neighbourhoods or web-based assisted learning might help to overcome this challenging situation and open new opportunities for the future. But also, further innovations which are implementable and financeable are necessary to enable a better and healthier life for people in need of care. How shall we develop home care innovations?

In Danube region countries, adequate innovation structures and mechanism for system implementation are completely absent or at least lacking.

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## D-CARE LABS IN A FEW WORDS...

It is for this reason that the project aims to establish specialized interregional D-Care Lab innovation structures to enable social service providers, product developers and social start-ups to design and implement better and innovative home care services and products for older persons, people with disabilities and children with special needs.

New regional D-Care Labs in 9 countries will create places and platforms that enable the creation of new services and products by multiple actors. Innovation teams are receiving practical guidance from problem exploration to the development of prototype and business model. New and sustainable home care services and products will be conceptualized.

The main objective of D-Care Labs is to strengthen the implementation of innovative social services in the domain of home care. The Transnational Lab Strategy is based on an analysis of beneficiary needs (incl. needs caused by the Coronavirus), innovation potentials and intends to identify complementary interregional resources.

At the same time, it is necessary to ensure that practical learning and new solutions become part of the respective national system. Therefore, we will develop a Transnational Lab Strategy to Promote Innovation Structures in the Field of Home Care based on national reports and practical experience of the D-Care Labs. The country reports include analysis of the needs of beneficiaries (incl. needs caused by COVID-19), the national situation of home care such as types of existing services and products as well as legal, policy, institutional and financial frameworks. In addition, the report assesses opportunities and structures on how to create innovations.

Based on these analyses, we will measure the impact of the pilot test of our new regional D-Care Labs programs. These learnings will be included in the strategy and an action plan to inform the different policy levels. It will be disseminated to and discussed with policymakers to enable necessary changes of framework conditions.





## D-CARE LABS IN A FEW WORDS...

During the pilot actions of 9 regional labs, innovation structures will be tested and improved. D-Care Labs will help institutional actors and other stakeholders in the DTP to identify obstacles, develop and implement a plan to address them; improve institutional capacities, analyse the beneficiary needs and innovation potential as well as offer a framework for the incubation of regional labs.

In addition, the regional D-Care Labs aim to establish an ecosystem of social investment and new collaborations (e.g. advisory boards) to include a variety of actors (e.g. ministries, insurances) into the innovation structures. In this way, sustainability of the structure, but also of the new services and products will be ensured.



The interregional learning, knowledge creation and community-building will take place in the Transnational Lab of the Lab. Accompanied and instructed by the University of Heidelberg, Centre for Social Investment and Innovation, partners jointly develop the regional D-Care Labs programs in a series of workshops and digital collaboration in the transnational partnership. In this way, the community of practitioners will share their experiences and learnings as well as best-practice solutions can be disseminated across the Danube region.

During the project, 250 social entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs will test the pilot regional D-Care Lab programs and at least 32 new services or products in the field of home care will be developed.



# MEET THE D-CARE LABS PROJECT PARTNERS

## Partnership:

Since 2011, a core of partners recognised the potential of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) framework.

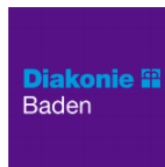
We already developed transnational partnerships and contributed to the implementation of the thematic priorities “people and skills” and institutional capacity and cooperation with civil society. Based on these experiences, the need for initiating transnational social innovation structures was identified and developed with key partners in a 2,5-years process.

## Partners:

- Diakonie Baden (Germany) - lead partner
- Grünhof (Germany),
- University of Heidelberg - CSI (Germany),
- Hungarian National Association of Local Authorities (Hungary),
- ACT Group (Croatia),
- Faculty of Law of University of Zagreb (Croatia),
- Federation of Social NGOs in Bulgaria,
- Caritas of the Archdiocese Vienna (Austria),
- Centre for European Perspective (Slovenia),
- Mozaik Foundation (Bosnia and Herzegovina),
- Partnership for Public Health Association (Bosnia and Herzegovina),
- Network of Organizations for Children of Serbia,
- AGAPEDIA Moldova Foundation (Moldova),
- FONT (România).

## Associated Partners (APs):

Ministry of Social Affairs Baden-Württemberg (Germany), Ministry of Interior (Hungary), Directorate-General for Social Affairs and Child Protection (Hungary), Ministry of Labour and Social Justice (România), Regional Development Agency - Central Region (România), Austrian Public Health Institute, City of Vienna (Austria), Labour and Statistics (Austria), ERSTE Foundation (Austria), Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection (Moldova), Hungarian Ministry of Human Capacities (Hungary), Municipality of Maribor (Slovenia), Agency for Social Assistance (Bulgaria).



Check out the D-Care Labs partners on [D-Care Labs YouTube channel](#)



# KICK-OFF EVENT OF THE D-CARE LABS

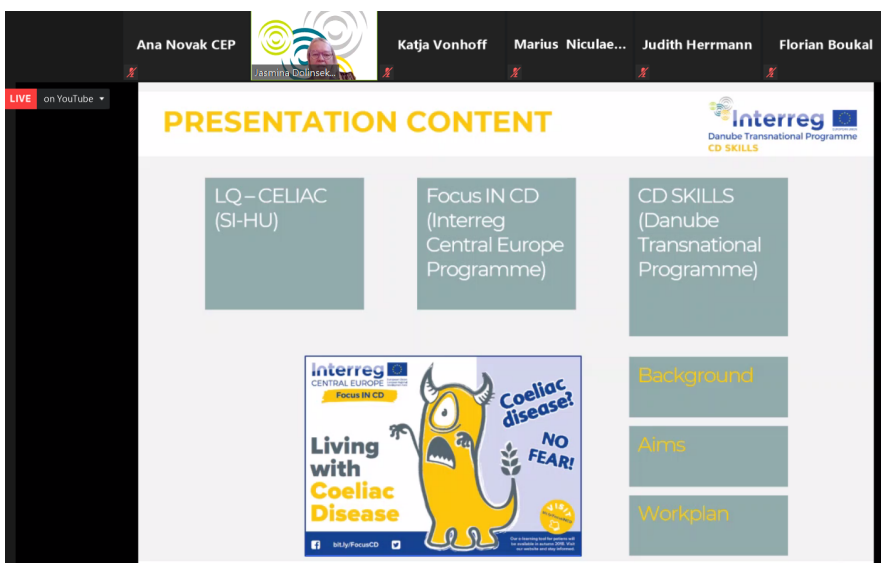
With the current COVID-19 situation, the 'new normality' of project kick-offs is - going virtual. And that is exactly what D-Care Labs project did on 20th October 2020.

With more than 180 people attending the virtual kick-off in a beautiful 3D environment created by Serbian start-up CollectiVibe, the D-Care Labs event began with the presentation of the vision of D-Care Labs project by Mr André Peters, representative of the lead partner Diakonie Baden and a video address by Ms Theresa Schopper, State Minister responsible for policy coordination in the Baden-Württemberg State Ministry.

The participants also heard more about the Danube Transnational Programme (DTP) by Mr Marius V. Niculae from the Joint Secretariat of the DTP.



With the welcomes underway, Ms Katja Vonhoff, Project Manager at Diakonie Baden presented the activities of the DTP project and all project partners, alongside their associated partners and paved the way for the presentation of two projects with whom D-Care Labs can learn and develop synergies - project CD Skills, presented by Ms Jasmina Dolinšek from the City of Maribor and Dr Jernej Dolinšek from University Medical Centre Maribor and project Finance4SocialChange, presented by Dr Volker Then from the University of Heidelberg.



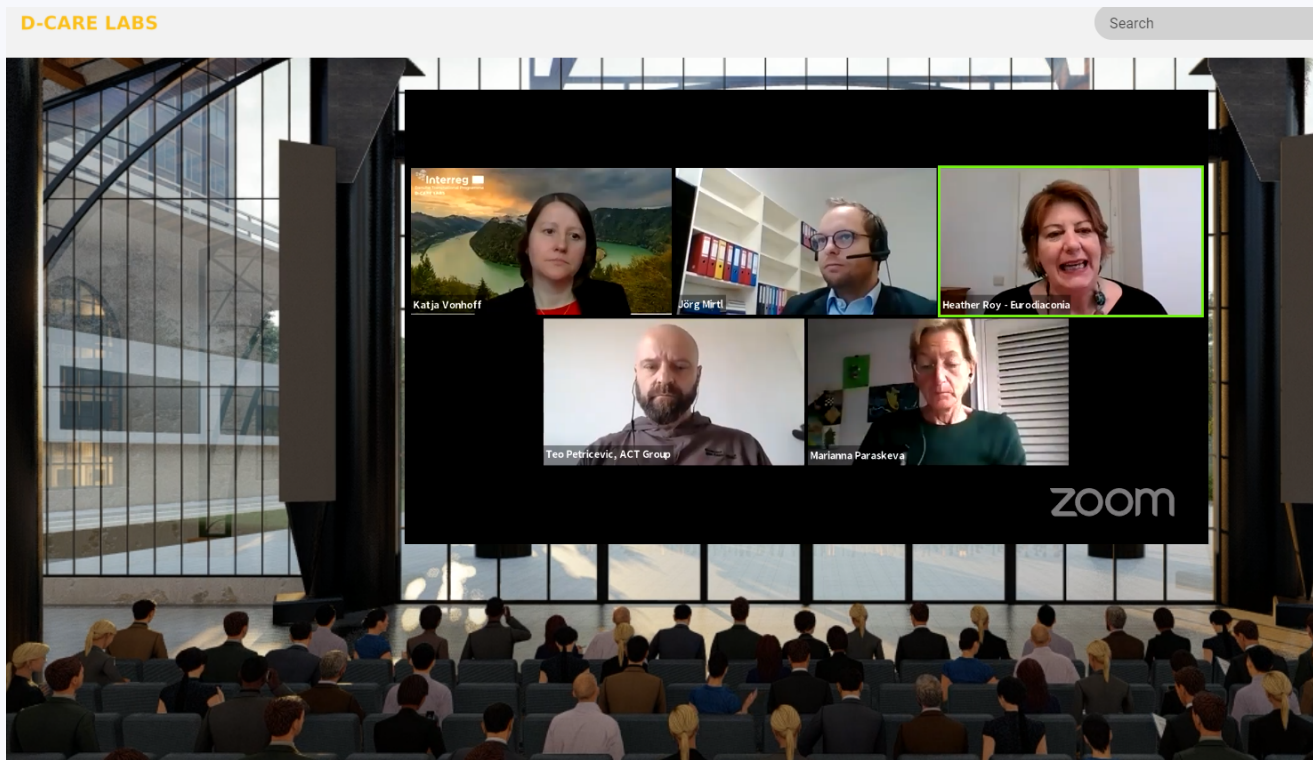
**CD SKILLS** project is addressing challenges of the healthcare sector in Celiac disease (CD) management in the Danube region (DR). Project activities will raise awareness, improve knowledge, skills and competences of all stakeholders involved in CD management, effectively improving the capacity of healthcare & social service in the DR. The project capitalizes on projects CE Focus IN CD and SI-HU LQ-CELIAC.

**Finance4SocialChange** project gives support to economy that inspires positive social change in the Danube Region. Through carefully designed activities a multi-disciplinary partnership of 14 partners from 12 countries, 6 associated partners from across Europe will join their knowledge and expertise in delivering the first "Social Impact Investment Strategy for the Danube region" with aim of paving the way for promoting more social innovations and development of investment-ready social enterprises.



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With COVID-19 strongly affecting the activities of the project, the current pandemic was also a strong focus of the regional D-Care Labs breakout sessions, with participants discussing the problems caused by COVID-19 pandemic in the field of home care and presentations of regional lab concepts as means of problem-solving.



The second part of the kick-off event took the form of a plenary discussion focused on the contribution of European collaboration to problem-solving in the social service sector and how European collaboration can support (inter-)regional social innovation processes.

The plenary discussion participants Ms Marie-Anne Paraskevas from Directorate General Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion at the European Commission, Ms Leonetta Pajer from the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia, Ms Heather Roy from Eurodiacona, Mr Jörg Mirtl from Priority Area 9 »People and Skills« of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region and Mr Teo Petričević from Act Group and D-Care Labs partner Croatia discussed their work priorities, the meaning of social innovation from their individual perspective and what possibilities they see for European collaboration on a transnational, regional or national level. The panel was expertly moderated by Ms Katja Vonhoff (Diakonie Baden).

High importance was put on the question of funding of projects in the sphere of social care and home care sector. When speaking about the accessibility of EU the speakers shone a light on the need to make funds more flexible and accessible and spoke about the need for innovation in funding processes. Bigger importance should also be put on sustainability and how to sustain change beyond the funding period.

The panel speakers agreed that despite the current challenges social innovators and businesses should not be afraid to go ahead and make a change.

Ms Marie-Anne Paraskevas (DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, EC): ***“Be resilient, don’t be afraid to go ahead and make a change in the lives of the people.”***



 **Interreg**   
Danube Transnational Programme  
**D-CARE LABS**

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