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Amt für Soziales

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WHO
Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and
Communities

Dezernat IV
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Datum und Zeichen Ihres Schreibens

Mein Zeichen (Bei Antwort bitte angeben)

Bochum, den

22. Juli 2025

Letter of Commitment - Application to Join the WHO Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the City of Bochum, I am pleased to express our commitment to join the WHO Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities.

Bochum is a city in North Rhine-Westphalia located in the centre of the Ruhr region, one of the largest urban metropolitan areas in Europe. With a population of approximately 375.00 inhabitants, it is the 16th largest city in Germany. Bochum covers an area of 145.4 square kilometres and is divided into six urban districts: Bochum-Mitte, Wattenscheid, Nord, Ost, Süd, and Süd-west.

Coal mining and the steel industry significantly shaped Bochum's economic and cultural development for many decades. With the decline of these industries, Bochum has underwent profound structural change from the 1960s onwards and developed into a modern center for research, services, and technology. The German Mining Museum, the mining hiking trails and the former mines converted into museums along the Route of Industrial Heritage, such as the Bochum Railway Museum and the Hanover Colliery, are reminders of the city's mining past.

Bochum now has an efficient infrastructure in which research, teaching, and business go hand in hand. A key driver of this transition is the Ruhr University Bochum (RUB), founded in 1965 as the first university in post-war Germany. Today it has more than 37,000 students and plays a central role in research, innovation, and regional development. With a total of 9 universities and more than 60,000 students, Bochum is one of the largest university locations in Germany. The universities are among the city's largest employers and, together with the technology centers, represent Bochum's transformation into a knowledge-based and innovation-driven economy that produces highly qualified specialists and innovative research.

Along with education, digitalization is an important driver of economic development. The city of Bochum ranks among the four most digitally advanced municipalities in the Ruhr region.

With the Smart City Bochum concept, the city is presenting a technical strategy for digitalization. Digital offerings such as the Bochum app, a wide range of digital services on the city's online service portal, and the internal digitalization of processes leverage the potential of digitalization to improve services for Bochum residents. One example is the "Senior Citizens' Portal", which will be launched by the end of 2026. It aims to create a comprehensive online platform offering information on events, services, and civic engagement opportunities. This initiative supports social participation and the city's broader aim of fostering an inclusive urban society that counters social isolation. Accessibility, digital inclusion, data protection, and cybersecurity are core aspects of this effort. The service is designed to meet the needs and preferences of older people, regardless of professional background, income, or education. Development takes place in close collaboration with the target group to ensure high usability and relevance.

This project is a measure of the Bochum Strategy 2030. This long-term, integrated urban development plan serves as a strategic framework for improving the city's quality of life, competitiveness, and social cohesion. At its core, the strategy focuses on the crosscutting themes of social justice, diversity, climate protection, digitalization, and public safety. By aligning urban transformation with the values of inclusion and sustainability, the Bochum Strategy 2030 provides a reliable and forward-looking foundation for addressing demographic change and promoting age-appropriate development in all areas of urban life.

While around 30 % of residents have a migration background, Bochum embraces this pluralism as a strength and promotes inclusive policies and cultural initiatives that reflect the needs of its diverse population, also offering a wide range of opportunities for international professionals and workers. One example is the city's recently established Welcome Office that helps international professionals and workers to settle quickly and easily.

Inclusion also encompasses the unrestricted participation of people with physical or mental disabilities in all areas of urban life. Therefore, the city is committed to promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities or limited mobility by removing barriers and improving accessibility in public spaces, transportation, educational institutions, and the workplace. This approach to urban development reflects Bochum's comprehensive commitment to diversity, sustainability and an age-friendly urban planning. Creating an age-friendly society is increasingly important for social life, as approximately 29 % of Bochum's residents are 60 years of age or older. In response to demographic change, the city is focussing on measures and concepts that support independent living in old age, promote intergenerational and intercultural exchange, and improve the quality of life for all citizens.

In Bochum, the topic of ageing is anchored as a crosscutting issue in all administrative areas - from housing and transport to education, health, security, and civic engagement. To address diverse challenges and coordinate the strategic efforts of the various departments the city of Bochum has established the "Life in Old Age" staff unit. The unit's main tasks include promoting interdisciplinary collaboration, coordinating a citywide "Life in Old Age" network, and providing accessible information through customized digital offerings.

The Life in Old Age Unit developed the "Action Plan for Life in Old Age 2025-2030: Measures for an Age-Friendly City of Bochum" to improve the quality of life for older people in Bochum. The plan serves as the central policy framework for the city of Bochum to promote active ageing, strengthen participation, and improve the overall quality of life of older people. In line with the Decade of Healthy Aging and the goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development this action plan also contributes to global efforts towards a healthier, fairer, and more inclusive society. The areas of life identified in the WHO approach for age-friendly cities and communities are central to the Bochum Action Plan for Life in Old Age. These include economic and social factors, the physical environment - i.e., transport, housing, public spaces, and buildings - as well as personal factors and behaviors. These factors have a strong influence on mobility, health, social participation, the quality of life of older people, and their ability to age in their familiar environment.

The Action Plan presents a comprehensive needs analysis and identifies existing challenges in five thematic focus areas: inclusive urban society, demographic change, civic engagement

and participation, healthy and active ageing, and independent and self-determined living. Within these thematic focus areas, the plan defines clear goals for all relevant areas of life. Twenty-nine concrete measures operationalize these goals and link them to specific performance indicators. Implementation of these measures is planned by 2030. On this basis, the city of Bochum brings the core values of the WHO approach to age-friendly cities and communities - respect for diversity, equity, participation, and the protecting rights of older people - to life and aligns its efforts with concrete local strategies, services, and community initiatives. The following sections show how Bochum is already pursuing these values.

1. Respect for diversity - Inclusive Urban Society

The city of Bochum views aging as a valuable and dynamic phase of life that brings experience, insight, and potential to society. Taking into account the diverse life realities and needs of older people, the city continuously works to provide all older residents with access to available services, adapt service structures to the specific needs of the population and reduce barriers to access to services and public spaces. With a long-term commitment to inclusion, Bochum aims to strengthen the participation of older people regardless of gender, cultural background, or social status. One approach to inclusion was the development of the online map Wheelmap Pro, which shows wheelchair-accessible locations in the city area.

In addition, the city promotes dialogue between different cultures, religions, and lifestyles and supports measures to improve living conditions, especially for disadvantaged groups. The state-funded program "Guter Lebensabend NRW" (2021-2023) has provided valuable insights into the living conditions of older people with a migration background in Bochum. Existing barriers, such as access to information and services, are often due to language and cultural differences. Therefore, the city of Bochum is implementing a targeted measure for diversity-oriented geriatric care. This includes considering the needs of older residents with a migration background and LGBTIQ people through training on cultural sensitivity and diversity for staff in outpatient geriatric care.

2. Equity - Addressing Structural Disadvantages in Later Life

To ensure equal opportunities for older people, the city of Bochum addresses structural disadvantages that accumulate over the course of life. Older women are disproportionately affected by old-age poverty due to interrupted employment histories, part-time work, and lower pensions. Furthermore, age discrimination in the labor market remains a major challenge. Despite their experience and qualifications, older workers often face stereotypes that limit their access to employment and participation in working life. To counteract these inequalities, the city promotes awareness-raising and inclusion programs and supports structures that improve the participation of older people affected by or at risk of poverty.

A key initiative is the funding project "#WEGEweisend ('leading the way') – Safe & Connected in Old Age" (2022-2027). The project offers residents aged 60 and over tailored support to improve their living and financial situation, promote social participation, enable independent living, and prevent poverty in old age. The project deploys trained volunteer support workers to improve access to hard-to-reach groups. The guides use existing networks and resources to specifically reach the target group and promote available services through home visits.

3. Participation - Strengthening Civic and Social Engagement

The city of Bochum actively promotes social participation of older people. A key initiative was the establishment of Senior Citizens' Offices in all six districts in 2014. These offices offer fair

and non-discriminatory access to counseling, educational, cultural, and health-related services. Since their establishment, the Senior Citizens' Offices have pursued the networking all stakeholders in elderly care, with the overarching goal of improving living conditions for older people in the context of demographic change. Over time, they have developed into important local contact points. Their wide range of services, such as patient companions, digital assistants, mobile services, and the promotion of volunteer engagement are well received by the target group. Low-threshold access to the responsible employees in the offices enables early, solution-oriented support and improves access to individualized assistance.

Bochum strengthens democratic engagement and supports intergenerational urban development. Therefore, the Council for Life in Old Age was established as a politically mandated municipal body to promote civic participation among older citizens. According to North Rhine-Westphalia's municipal code, the Council is authorized to comment on all municipal matters, particularly those affecting the needs of older people. It serves as an institutionalised platform for dialogue between older people and political decision-makers and ensures that their perspectives are taken into account in planning and development.

4. Protecting Rights - Strengthening Independence and Safety in Old Age

Bochum is committed to ensuring that older people know and can exercise their rights, and feel adequately protected. Within the strategic framework of the "Action Plan for Life in Old Age 2025 - 2030: Measures for an Age-Friendly City of Bochum", the city is working with a broad network of stakeholders to actively incorporate the perspectives and needs of older residents into urban development processes. A particular focus is on the development and expansion of age-appropriate, barrier-free housing concepts that enable older people to live independent and dignified lives.

Initiatives, such as ""#WEGEweisend – Secured & Connected in Old Age", the Council for Life in Old Age, and the Senior Citizens' Offices promote information, empowerment, and participation. They serve as central local contact points and offer low-threshold access to advice, support, and information about individual rights and available services. Furthermore, the city, in cooperation with the local adult education center, offers events and workshops on political education and legal awareness. Together, these measures contribute to empowering older people and fostering a culture of informed and active citizenship.

With these initiatives and its ongoing commitment, the city of Bochum aims to make a meaningful contribution to the development of an age-friendly society and to actively promote the core values of the WHO's Age-friendly Cities and Communities approach. A strong interest in international exchange, mutual learning, and strategic cooperation underscores the city's willingness to join the global network.

We hereby declare our formal intention to join the WHO Global Network Age-friendly Cities and Communities and commit to fulfilling the network's goals and objectives. The city of Bochum is committed to age-friendly urban development and is ready to assume responsibility as part of a global movement that promotes ageing with dignity, diversity, and security. The "Action Plan for Life in Old Age 2025 - 2030: Measures for an Age-Friendly City of Bochum" serves as a concrete instrument for implementing the city's strategic vision in practice and is thus an essential basis for Bochum's membership in the Age-friendly Cities and Communities network. It reflects the city's commitment to addressing demographic change in a holistic and future-oriented manner.

Governance and Contact Person

The implementation of age-friendly measures is coordinated by the Life in Old Age Unit within the Bochum city administration. For all matters related to the membership in the WHO Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities, please contact:

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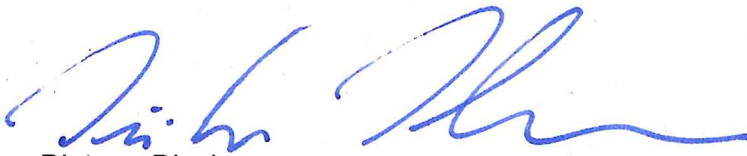
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We look forward to hearing from you and remain at your disposal for any further information.

Best regards,



Dietmar Dieckmann