

**Welcome words
for the
Evening Reception of the AWO Region Hannover e.V.
on 06 May 2009 at the Conference Center of the
AWO Region Hannover e.V.
at approx. 18.30 o'clock**

**on the occasion of
the workshop of the AAMEE Exchange Programme**

1. Welcome and Introduction

**Dear Dr. Peil,
dear Mr Teuber,
dear Mr Strotmann,
dear devoted organisers of this event and
last but not least
dear participants,**

first of all I would like to thank the AWO Region Hannover e.V. very much for your warm welcome.

It is an honour and a pleasure for us to be here and to have the support of the AWO Region Hannover e.V. for a new European approach of the North Rhine-Westphalian state government – the active ageing of migrant elders.

On behalf of the Ministry for Intergenerational Affairs, Family, Women and Integration of the German State of North Rhine-Westphalia, I cordially welcome all of you to the "Active Ageing of Migrant Elders across Europe (AAMEE)" project's exchange programme and its workshop here in Hannover. It is being organised in a fruitful co-operation with our hosts, the winners of the first prize of the AAMEE project's Good Practice Award for the Non-Profit Sector: the AWO Region Hannover e.V.

2. The AAMEE project

This workshop takes place in the context of the European AAMEE project which will last until the end of this year's November.

It was initiated by our ministry and is co-funded by the European Commission.

In Germany, the subject of ageing and ethnicity started to become relevant about 15 years ago. The main focus used to be on the so-called culturally sensitive care for elders. We enlarge this approach by looking at issues of healthy and active ageing, and thus also concentrate on the life span before migrant elders actually need care.

Via the AAMEE project we wish that Europe conceives the increasing diversity in older age as a chance for cultural, social, economic and political development. From the very beginning of this project on we have campaigned for this goal at many European institutions. Until the end of 2009, we will develop a corresponding catalogue of actions

And

we will do this together with you as well as

- with representatives of the economic and cultural sectors,**
- with researchers and**
- with political, social and economic decision makers.**

The Ministry's engagement for migrant elders started a few years ago and we eagerly work on the sustainability of the efforts made so far after AAMEE project will terminate.

3. Hannover

For a number of reasons we are in very good hands in Hannover, because - just to name a few - :

- the City of Hannover started to pay attention to the life situation and needs of migrant elders very early on compared to other local authorities in Germany;**
- the City of Hannover was among the first signatories of the Memorandum for Culturally Sensitive Care;**
- within the City of Hannover various cultural specific and transcultural services are offered to migrant elders. We are happy to get to know some of them tomorrow.**

We feel comfortable here because with our European project AAMEE, we *also* appraise the growing cultural diversity in older age as a chance and an opportunity. Migrant elders have brought extra value to Europe. They possess manifold personal competencies that need to be acknowledged and used by our societies.

4. The AWO Region Hannover e.V.

The AWO Region Hannover e.V. received the award for its remarkable and inspiring work at the first European Conference "New Face for Europe. Migrant Elders across

Europe – from Challenges to Opportunities" which took place in Bonn, Germany from September 30th to October 2nd 2008 and also forms part of the AAMEE project.

Some of you were there as witnesses.

The AWO's project "Intercultural Work with Older People" develops and offers easy and nearby access activities for migrant elders via an integrative approach. Turkish people, contingent refugees, immigrants from the former Yugoslavia, Russian or Arabic speaking senior citizens as well as others can use the centres' open and multilingual counselling, different leisure time activities and cultural events. They can either stay amongst themselves or mix via intercultural meetings.

All senior groups are organised on a voluntary and multilingual basis. The participation of migrant elders is fostered by meetings and discussions on for instance planned activities.

The project's full-time staff is also responsible for public relations and awareness rising. By doing so, it aims at sensitising the general public for the needs of migrant elders as well as informing migrant elders about existing public social services.

I wish to congratulate the AWO Region Hannover e.V. once more for having received the AAMEE project's first prize of the Good Practice Competition for the voluntary sector.

The AWO's work and initiative certainly is an example of good practice which is worth all the European attention combined here today. We hope that many organisations will be inspired by the AWO's work and that new contacts and possible future co-operations will arise as one of the results of this workshop.

We are happy to be here today and wish the AWO Region Hannover e.V. the best for its future work and will be pleased to stay in close contact in the future.

4. Annotations to the workshop

Before I leave the floor to Mr Strotmann I would like to cordially thank some persons for their work:

- the other members of staff of the AAMEE project at the Ministry in Düsseldorf,**
- Ms Dr. Vera Gerling for supporting the workshop academically and happily representing the AAMEE project with me during our stay in Hannover and**
- our interpreter for translations during the course of our workshop.**

Thank you very much for your attention and let me thank the AWO Region Hannover e.V. and the City of Hannover again for having us here, for holding this wonderful reception and for having co-organised the certainly very inspiring workshop ahead of us.

Let us all have a wonderful evening!