

**Welcome words
for the
Evening Reception of the City of Mannheim and the
Caritas Association Mannheim e.V.
on 15 June 2009 at the
House of the Caritas
at approx. 18.30 o'clock**

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

1. Welcome and Introduction

**Dear Ms. Trösch,
dear Ms Hertlein,
dear devoted organisers of this event and
last but not least
dear participants,**

first of all I would like to thank the City of Mannheim and the Caritas Association Mannheim 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 City of Mannheim and the Caritas Association Mannheim 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 Mannheim. It is being organised in a fruitful co-operation with our hosts, the winners of the third prize of the AAMEE project's Good Practice Award for the Non-Profit Sector: the Caritas Association Mannheim.

The AAMEE project leader Mr. Dr. Claus Eppe will join us later this evening. Today he had to be part of internal

meetings at the Ministry in Düsseldorf. He is sorry not to be able to hold the welcoming words to you himself.

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. Mannheim

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

- the City of Mannheim started to pay attention to the life situation and needs of migrant elders very early on compared to other local authorities in Germany and
- within the City of Mannheim various cultural specific and transcultural services are offered to migrant elders.

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 Caritas Association Mannheim

The Caritas Association Mannheim received the award for its 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 project "Breakfast with Teens" in which migrant elders, e.g. so called late repatriates (i.e. ethnic Germans from the former USSR) share breakfasts and other joint activities with young people is an inspiring example of good practice concerning the active ageing of migrant elders across Europe. And it is also an example on how coincidences can lead to new and interesting projects.

The facilities of the Caritas Youth Centre are used by youngsters as well as seniors. In 2008 the contact between both groups arose spontaneously. During school holidays, a couple of youngsters happened to become aware of a Tuesday morning breakfast for older people. This awakened both groups` interest to get to know one another.

Since this time, an initiative was started to link up both groups. The seniors take joy in sharing their experiences with the youngsters by e.g. teaching them table manners and etiquette. Both groups interact, discuss and perform joint activities like e.g. team games, dance and singing performances, baking, etc. This intergenerational project aims at preventing loneliness and isolation of migrant elders and encourages them to keep their social life active. Both groups enjoy each others company and make important

experiences on how to bridge the gaps between different generations.

I wish to congratulate the Caritas Association Mannheim once more for having received the AAMEE project's third prize of the Good Practice Competition for the voluntary sector.

The Caritas Mannheim's work and initiative certainly is an example of good practice which is worth the European attention combined here today. We hope that many organisations will be inspired by the Caritas Mannheim'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 Caritas Association Mannheim the best for its future work and will be pleased to stay in contact in the future.

4. Annotations to the workshop

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, some of them are or will be here today as well**
- Ms Dr. Vera Gerling for supporting the workshop academically and co-representing the AAMEE project during our stay in Mannheim and**

- our interpreter for translations during the course of our workshop.

Thank you very much for your attention and let me thank the Caritas Association Mannheim and the City of Mannheim 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!