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**POSTER ABSTRACT****EMPOWERing older people and their communities to manage their own CARE (EMPOWERCARE): Evaluation study of a social innovation initiative across four European countries**

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This paper outlines the evaluation strategy of the EMPOWERCARE, an EU Interreg 2 Seas funded social innovation project, which involves a partnership of local authorities, universities and non-governmental organisations from four European countries: Belgium, France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Partners are working in collaboration with local people aged 65+, and those aged 50+ with at least one chronic condition, to respond to current gaps in the care of older people. The project aims specifically to contribute to person-centred care and technology knowledge transfer whilst reducing isolation, loneliness and increasing solidarity amongst older people and their communities. During the project, partners are jointly developing a strategy for implementing good-practice models, a workforce transformation approach via shared training and a technology blueprint with emphasis on caring digital technologies to address the rising demand for health and social care services for older people. The project addresses this challenge by drawing on community assets, involving older people in decisions about their own health and wellbeing, enabling them to keep healthier and in their own homes and communities safely for longer. The project's evaluation aims to measure the impact of the EMPOWERCARE initiative across 7 pilot sites in the 4 participating countries. Given the Covid-19 pandemic, the evaluation design has been developed with a view to being agile and able to respond to complex and shifting situations, and especially so in terms of what and how data are collected. A realist synthesis approach (Pawson & Tilley, 2004) guides the evaluation within a descriptive case study design (Yin 2003) to identify and contextualise the project strategies that are influential within and across the 7 different case study sites. The evaluation uses multiple interdisciplinary methods, such as surveys, Photovoice and Social Return on Investment, to capture a range of perspectives across three timepoints, baseline (T0), mid-point (T1) and end-point (T2). Online surveys are conducted with both end-users and the workforce in all pilot sites at T0 and T2. At T1, end-users are actively involved in creating visual data through Photovoice to capture their lived experiences with local initiatives in pilot sites. Visual data are going to be displayed at pilot site exhibitions targeted to key local stakeholders and members of the workforce. Focus groups will be conducted with all participants reflecting on the visual data exhibition to explore insights about the initiative from current and future perspectives. This aspect is informed by a Social Return on Investment approach. The sequential data collection

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of multiple sources and longitudinal study design identify patterns of change and impact. The evaluation design will deliver a theory-driven rich explanation of what works about EMPOWERCARE and for whom, why, how and in what circumstances it works. The analysis of the evaluation findings will contribute to a more empowered person-centred approach, with more inclusive and caring digital health solutions that will allow policy makers to develop localised, efficient and social-value driven services to meet the rising needs of older people in the European regions.