

Intercultural Creativity of Seniors

1. Project Relevance

Foreword:

In 2005 was founded the European Network for Ageing and Culture *age-culture.net*, aiming at the recognition, support and enrichment of the cultural lives and learning of older people in Europe through advocacy, information, education, training, shared expertise and strategic partnership. In many European countries facilitators, art educators and artists are already undertaking community work with older people and intergenerational groups by means of arts and culture. However, the members of the European Network for Ageing and Culture *age-culture.net* are aware there is a need for policy development in order to address the vulnerable status of the cultural programmes targeting seniors. This cannot be tackled effectively until the rights of older people to participate in the arts are recognised, acknowledged and supported more comprehensively at the policy level. Furthermore, it is important to improve the communication between seniors and cultural organisations in order to better acknowledge the specific desires and needs of the target group.

Project name: InCreaSe – Intercultural Creativity of Seniors

Coordinating organisation: “Kompetenzzentrum für Kultur und Bildung im Alter“ KUBIA (KUBIA, Competence centre for culture and education of seniors), Germany

Countries involved: Belgium, Austria, the Netherlands, Portugal, Hungary, Scotland, Germany and Spain

Types of organisations involved: Associations, NGO-s, cultural organisations and foundations on national and local level, seniors’ organisations

Implementation level: local and European

Website: <http://www.ibk-kubia.de/content/view/6/15/>

So, partners from twelve European countries joined this European Network for Ageing and Culture *age-culture.net*. They meet on a regular basis, exchange and share expertise and co-operate in multilateral projects within the funding schemes of European Lifelong Learning programmes; the selected and described hereafter learning partnership **InCreaSe-project** is one of these initiatives.

*The clearly described target group and presented initiatives (workshops) in the participating countries are very much connected to the ASLECT-project - during the two-year learning partnership, the partners shared expertise and experiences in cultural work with the older generation. In the workshops from Belgium, Austria, the Netherlands, Portugal, Hungary, Scotland, Germany and Spain, **InCreaSe** partners focused on different approaches towards artistic work with older people.*

2. Background and Aims

InCreaSe was designed as a travelling training academy for cultural learning and participation of older people in Europe. The specific aims of the partnership were to foster creativity in later life, and to encourage seniors’ meaningful participation in the arts as creators, organisers and audiences.

Through the organised workshops, a body of knowledge was built up on ways to increase seniors’ [older people’s] participation in the arts. The project took place in eight countries where it was implemented successfully in the form of workshops stimulating seniors’ participation in cultural fields. The partners included non-profit organisations, educational institutions, foundations and associations from the participating countries active in the field of culture and arts. Explored were models and methods of reaching out to the diverse age

group that for various reasons do not participate in regular culture, *i.e.* very old people with a lack of mobility, culturally diverse seniors or people with a lower educational background. The experiences in the workshops were reflected and evaluated by partners and incorporated into the “**InCreaSe Guide**” where the evaluation results are presented along with five thematic strands and are illustrated by concrete examples from the different workshops.

The concrete topics of the various workshops in different countries were:

- Intergenerational Creativity;
- Key-work in Museums;
- Community Art and Seniors;
- Senior Volunteers and Traditional Arts;
- Volunteering, Learning and the Arts in Later Life;
- Art Gallery Education programmes for Seniors [Older People];
- Seniors [Older People], New Technologies and the Arts.

With **InCreaSe**, the partners wanted to establish a European platform of expertise in this field and to push forward the development of training for those facilitators who want to work with seniors in the arts.

3. Description of the Target Groups

The five thematic strands and their concrete activities described in the “**InCreaSe Guide**” are:

1. Increasing the Cultural participation of Older People (Vienna, Austria)

- using the “*Key-work method*”/Key-work in Museums: bring together cultural organisations with older people who are not yet actively participating in cultural activities.

Three seminars entitled *Culture on Wheels* (an initiative of KulturKontakt Austria from 2005 till 2008 – ‘A mobile cultural service’ or ‘How immobile senior citizens can participate in public cultural life’) introduced 70 senior citizens to new fields of activities, all of which were free of charge. In varied cultural programmes, the senior citizens met new people and visited new places. Special guided tours offered them the chance to take a look behind the scenes of historic cultural buildings, municipal museums, contemporary art galleries and theatres. Music and architecture were also included in the activities. The senior citizens became *key-workers* who, then, can create access and open doors to these cultural institutions for other older people.

The seminars inspired several projects - two of which are ongoing, while others were completed - reflecting the participants’ various interests (such as: the *key-workers* photographed the exhibition at the Union of Austrian Artists Vienna Secession and then re-created the display at a home for retired people; “Monastery in the Trunk” - the *key-worker* who created this trunk herself used the contents to present aspects of the cultural life from a monastery at a home for retired people etc).

Culture on Wheels even gave rise to new projects, one of which was presented to the **InCreaSe** partners: “*I spy with my eye*” - an intergenerational project of a primary school, the Museum of Modern Art (MUMOK) and the Union of Austrian Artists Vienna Secession - the *key-workers* prepared workshops suitable for 6 to 10-year-old children; then, they explore the exhibitions together with the pupils. Afterwards, the children documented the things they saw, felt or impressed them during the tour, in the MUMOK-studio/teaching room. The whole process raised discussions about the arts, about different ways to see and about the different perspectives of the old and of the young.

2. Supporting Social and Cultural Diversity in Older Age (Rotterdam, The Netherlands)

- The Dutch *Euro+ Song festival* - music and song festival which includes:

- Friendly audition days spread all over the city (in 2010, 5 cities took part);

- Master classes provided by well-known singers in different music styles;
- Final concert featuring the winners of preliminary rounds with all the other singers in large choirs.

The auditions, master classes and preliminary rounds (small concerts per se), all took place in care homes, neighbourhood centres and small theatres throughout the city. Having all these activities near, the singers and prospective audiences build relationships and networks to start with. After establishing these connections, it is much easier to ask people to come to the Final Event that usually takes place in a large and famous venue at the heart of the city.

3. Stimulating One's Own Artistic Expression (Langenhagen, Germany)

- The *Ghost-Walk project* organised by Kunstverein Langenhagen: an inclusive community arts programme.

Ghost-Walk project was part of a gallery education programme of the Kunstverein Langenhagen and it was related to the exhibition programme from 2009.

Seniors share, in interviews with younger people, their memories of sights and special landmarks of the city. Based on these audio tapes, text samples were created, using all forms of literary expression. Walks through the city were organized, and text samples were presented to the public and read out by adults, both young and old. All the stories would finally be compiled and published in a book.

The whole project lasted six months; during this period, three exhibitions were held. This made it easier to attract participants and to raise public awareness. Almost 100 people from various generations and social backgrounds met and worked together on an inclusive project.

4. Improving Intergenerational Dialogue (Brussels, Belgium)

- "*Valise, Pilule et Chapeau*" ("*Bag, pill and hat*"): an intergenerational theatre play, involving two generations – teenagers from two secondary schools and elders from rest homes.

Developed by means of biographical methods and improvisational techniques – a one-year-long process (a course of theatrical expression), which improved the communication between generations. Two films were produced: the first film was about the work in progress (all rehearsals and meetings were filmed) and the second film was about the play itself. The project was supported by theatre professionals – a director, a stage manager etc.

Once a week, during the school year, the seniors went to school and had a two-hour drama workshop along with the teenagers on the course. On each occasion, the workshop was filmed to provide material for the play. Before each intergenerational meeting, Entr'âges (the Belgium project-partner) organised a discussion session to encourage teenagers to be open-minded about stereotypes of the old and the young, as well as about the fears and desires they both shared.

Mentoring by both theatre professionals and elderly care practitioners was necessary to encourage and sustain the young and the old alike.

The Belgium partner Entr'âges used the films made during the production of "*Valise, Pilule et Chapeau*" during its coaching sessions provided to high school students and to community groups. These coaching sessions were used to illustrate the teamwork between the different ages, as well as to show the role played by older people in society and the importance of good health and lifelong learning for an elder.

5. Encouraging Volunteer Engagement (University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, UK)

- *Volunteer Tour Guides*: a personalised and unique service to the community by showing members of the public around the historic Barony and Ramshorn buildings, belonging to the University, in the summertime.

In the summer of 1994, the Barony Hall and the Ramshorn buildings were first opened to the public, while a group of Learning-in-Later-Life students was recruited and trained to act as

guides. Initially, the guides were trained by a local historian and a guiding specialist. To begin with, the number of guiding days was restricted to the number of guides available. However, once the experiment proved to be successful, more guides were recruited from among the students at the Senior Studies Institute; it was decided that the best people to train new guides were the existing guides, and this was how the training was carried out.

By law, 'reasonable adjustments' to all the public buildings have to be made in order to ensure that they are accessible to all people, and the University of Strathclyde did its best to comply with these regulations.

Seniors/guides were involved in conducting campus tours for alumni and visiting groups, as well as in assisting delegates at conferences. In the wintertime, guides met on a monthly basis. Talks on relevant topics were arranged, while visits to places of interest, lunches and other social events were organised. Currently, there are 30 guides.

Since the guiding activity began in 1994, almost 30,500 visitors have toured the Barony and Ramshorn.

4. Outputs and Multiplying Outcomes

The above-described workshops and projects from different countries within the “**InCreaSe Guide**” show they are either following certain previous samples and activities or did/will/can serve to other further initiatives and activities.

Chapter III, “Looking Ahead of the “**InCreaSe Guide**”, emphasizes the partners’ statements on four important components, *i.e.*:

1. Providing a Welcoming Context and Good Framework Conditions

The partners’ overall conclusion on the context of the projects was that cultural programmes should be oriented towards the demands, needs and desires of a changing demography. Interests of older people have shifted; living conditions and lifestyle are continuously changing.

2. Using Appropriate Methods

Obviously, there is no recipe for ‘the successful project’; rather the flexibility of the methods; approaches and skills used has to be emphasized. These approaches should be reciprocal in character, and they should include cultural heritage. Older people want to be addressed not only as consumers, but also as creators of the arts.

Here is a short list of some crucial ‘to do’s’ for finding the best techniques related to the work with seniors within cultural programmes based on the first-hand experience of the **InCreaSe** partnership:

- Any cultural programme has to lean on the participants’ resources, competences and life experiences;
- Cultural programmes should provide space for the experimentation and development of the elders’ talents and potential for learning;
- Cultural programmes must have a high artistic and professional quality;
- Cultural organisations should employ qualified facilitators who have expertise and experience in the given field of activity;
- Training for those who wish to work artistically with older people and in intergenerational settings is required;
- Cultural programmes for intergenerational dialogue should be created;

- Cultural programmes should support self-sustaining, self-organised and self-directed learning;
- Cultural programmes should consider the diverse demands of older people, e.g. by flexible scheduling; suitable venues;
- Cultural programmes should have a closer relationship with ITC and foster the e-inclusion of the age group.

3. Success Factors For Developing Long-Term Strategies

The partners in this collaboration were highly motivated to try and identify the factors and elements that made their particular project successful, and to share them with the others. Success indicators were identified in terms of sustainability and transferability; such indicators are meant to serve as a good basis for building long-term strategies. The following points were selected from a longer list as, probably, the most crucial recommendations:

- Participants need to find enjoyment within the process and with the product;
- Cultural programmes must pay attention to the professional quality (artistic and educational);
- Art and culture institutions should provide space for communication with different social groups;
- Designers of cultural programmes should be open towards new ideas, but should adapt them in consideration of the local conditions;
- Cultural programmes are often temporary projects so it is important to give them a reliable basis in terms of funding, space and personnel in order to benefit from the established structures;
- There should be long-term programmes instead of projects (but sequentially offered to participants). Programmes have to be renewed as new challenges occur;
- Establishing contacts and networking should be recognised as an important and long-lasting part of the work;
- Advocacy for the political and financial support of cultural programmes is essential;
- Cooperation and exchange of ideas between professionals involved in art, educational and social institutions need to be facilitated on the local, national and European levels to share the already existing expertise and the transfer of good practice.

4. Creating a Win-Win Situation: the Benefits

The **InCreaSe** partners highlighted benefits from three perspectives:

➤ For the individuals:

- The ability to explore new cultural fields and generate new insights is enhanced;
- Individual capacities are empowered by stimulating curiosity, encouraging personal reflection and dealing with complexity;
- The individual develops competences to cope with the challenges of daily life;
- Cultural participation permits social linkage and prevents isolation;
- Opportunities are provided to learn, to participate and to exchange knowledge;
- The encounters with younger generation create positive challenges for older people while giving them the feeling that they are part of the future;

- An active participation in cultural life improves the quality of life.
- For the organisations:
 - The ability to address the relevant needs of a community is improved;
 - The development of their capacity to act as a catalyst for action in partnering institutions is supported;
 - A learning community inside and outside the organisation is created;
 - Working with this very fast growing target-group creates an opportunity for the sustainable development of an audience;
 - Targeted cultural programmes improve communication with audiences;
 - Availability and accessibility for many different social groups justify the spreading of resources;
 - The expertise and network of older people (friends, professionals...) can highly benefit the organisation, e.g. by volunteer commitment;
 - It helps the development of new programmes and/or the connection with the existing successful projects.
- For the society:
 - Through the appreciation of the cultural contribution of older people, young people see the value of their roots, while older people feel that they actually contribute to the future;
 - Arts and cultural programmes are a good vehicle for the stimulation and improvement of the intergenerational interaction;
 - The encounter with younger generations creates positive challenges for older people. It sets good examples for new generations by creating positive role models;
 - Empirical studies and research show that cultural participation can lead to savings for the health sector;
 - The setting of a cultural programme for older people fosters professional cooperation within the different sectors of society;
 - New strategies to reach culturally diverse seniors are provided;
 - Arts and cultural programmes brighten up community life;
 - Cultural programmes foster the public consciousness of older people issues.

5. Impact and Sustainability

It is the general view of the project-group that the connection between art and culture, on the one hand, and older people, on the other hand, is not so evident and is not on the decision makers' agenda. The members of the **InCreaSe** Partnership hope they managed to contribute to the advocacy for this issue; they also hope that the shared and described experiences will help those who wish to launch successful art and culture projects for seniors.

6. Educational Process

The **InCreaSe** project was a learning partnership and, as such, there was no pure educational program or process developed or used.

However, all the partners stated they benefited from the knowledge gained during the visits to the host organization, learning the partner's daily work on site. Not only did they acquire new ideas and inspiration, but they also learned about the many different approaches used within the development of cultural programmes for and with seniors [older people]. European collaboration also proved to be more than helpful when lobbying for this topic at the local level. The fact that a very diverse range of cultural work for seniors is already and successfully happening in many European countries is a convincing argument for local decision-makers and funding providers. In this respect, not only did **InCreaSe** help increase the understanding of European processes and policies in this field of work, but it also gave an impetus to every partner.