

## Seniors as Educators and Valorisation of Traditional Knowledge– Doing2Learn

### 1. Project Relevance

Doing2learn project presents an interesting and promising approach concerning the re-engagement of seniors in learning, particularly in ICT skills development. It also has at its core the concept of seniors as learning resources and providers of learning, valorising their traditional knowledge and experience. It is based on a participative approach: partners worked closely with seniors, developing the activities together with them and taking into account their needs and concerns. Activities with seniors included training, support and mentoring on the development of the contents of their own courses – still available on the project website – as well as a study trip and cultural visit to Wales. The subjects and the contents of the courses developed by seniors were chosen by them based on their own experience. Activities were conducted by 6 partners in 7 countries and 8 languages.

**Project name:** Doing2Learn

**Project number:** 141998-LLP-1-2008-1-FI-GRUNDTVIG-GMP

**Coordinating organisation:** Finlands svenska Marthaförbund r.f

**Countries involved:** Romania, Wales, Slovakia, Italy, France, Germany, Finland

**Types of organisations involved:** University, governmental institution, cooperative, sme

**Implementation level:** European

**Website:** [www.doing2learn.eu](http://www.doing2learn.eu)

### 2. Background and Aims

As part of a European cooperation project, the activities took place in several countries, involving senior persons from Romania, UK, Slovakia, Italy, France, Germany, and Finland. The practices took place partially at a local level; however, a cooperation dimension also existed, the groups of seniors from different countries participating in one common action – the European Learning Week. This common action provided a common purpose to all the groups of learners.

The project is representative for the idea of an older/senior learner who becomes himself/herself a resource for learning and a trainer himself/herself. After being initiated in ICT and after attending communication training, seniors were assisted to develop their own course, using their skills and experience. Consequently, seniors involved in the project produced a series of “How to...” online courses, which are still available on the project website. All “How to...” courses originated in the seniors’ skills and expertise, in their traditional knowledge and practice (How to cook, How to repair, etc.) The key message concerns the way of working with seniors as learners and resources, which is based on participation. In this sense, the partners’ action research reports are revealing the difficulties which they faced sometimes in attracting older people to learn again, to learn new things and in making them gain the confidence necessary to pass on their experience. Participative action research seems to be the key of success in relation to those groups of seniors who were most reluctant to engaging again in learning.

The approach used in the project seems to have multiple benefits for senior learners, as evidenced by the interviews published on the website in the Learners corner. The practical approach – seniors learned something in order to be able to achieve/to do something else – proved to be functional. Benefits are to be found at the level of self-perception - increased confidence in his/her own learning capacities and re-positioning of the self-image as owner of a skill or expertise that is valuable. There were four steps in the seniors’ learning process, moving gradually from the phase of building trust and creating motivation, to gaining confidence in using ICT, communicating and sharing experience with people from other countries:

1. valorisation of traditional knowledge
2. informal learning
3. e-learning
4. intercultural exchange

No documentation on the project's impact was available; however, the potential impact can be estimated to occur at the level of organisations working in the field of integration of seniors, as the materials produced in the project can provide them with useful training resources, examples, as well as inspiration sources for teachers and trainers.

### **3. Description of Target Groups**

The main target group of this project was formed of people over 50.

### **4. Outputs and Multiplying Outcomes**

#### Report

The "Action Research Report" as an online book: <http://doing2learn.eu/en/research>

In addition to an introduction into action research, the book contains general aspects and a collection of materials concerning the teaching and learning in later life from a European perspective.

Each project partner summarized in details its own view and approaches on working with older learners. Included are useful forms used during the project lifetime to access learners' competencies, barriers and needs and to get commitment for building a personal learning plan.

#### Communication Book

The purpose of this Communication handbook is to assist users in communicating effectively. It contains a selection of materials used by partners for talking and teaching about communication. The book also lists the main principles of communication, as well as some advices for giving a presentation and how to communicate via e-mail and Skype. There is also a checklist for an effective meeting communication included. These materials are available in the English language, and their aim is to support all those who want to improve their communication skills: <http://doing2learn.eu/en/communication>

#### Mentoring Book

A mentoring book was created in order to support and inspire mentors and mentees. It is an excerpt of materials used within the mentor program by the Finish partner, which explains the idea of being a mentor and how to make it working.

**The book is available in the English language at <http://doing2learn.eu/en/mentoring-handbook>**

#### Online Courses

The courses are available online at <http://doing2learn.eu/courses>

According to an agreed common framework for publishing ICT courses and "How-to..." courses, partners and learners published in total 23 online courses. Eight of these courses are ICT basic courses, available in the languages of all partners (English, Italian, French, Romanian, Swedish, Welsh and Slovakian). All How-to-courses are available in English, in the language of the partner which originated it and, partially, in the languages of the other partners, as well.

The courses are clearly structured and use a mix of media, such as text, graphics, images, slideshows and videos.

The ICT courses were particularly created to transmit the absolute basics of web technology and to break down learners' barriers on using the web by creating their How-to-courses. The ICT courses were used and will be used further by partners as an introductory learning resource for conveying ICT basics.

### Project Website

The project website was developed in a really agile process, which means a permanent adaptation and inclusion of features according to the partners' and learners' needs. Partners were trained; online video tutorials were developed for help. The site is multilingual, and contains a structure for online courses, research, mentoring and communication books, weblogs, personal contact forms, all reports, contracts and financial report forms, internal forums for discussing issues about different work packages, a wiki for organizing the learning week in Wales and the Learning Guide.

### European Residential Learning Week

The preparation for the European learning week started in June 2009. Partners used a wiki on the website to collect ideas and to discuss organizational issues. The learning week took place between May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010 and May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2010 in Llangollen, Wales. In total, 20 learners from 6 countries participated in the European learning week, and presented their How-to-courses with pride and joy.

A summary of the activities is available on the project website.

### Quality Assurance & Evaluation

A quality and evaluation plan was produced and discussed with partners; it is available on the project website, along with meeting evaluations, partner's evaluation and the evaluation reports.

### Exploitation

For motivating the people who were taking part in a project to be active and learn as long as they live, a short film about the project work was made. The learners talk about their motives, their experiences and what they have learned. <http://doing2learn.eu/en/learning-experience>

A learning guide presents the methods used and developed within the project in order to involve the older participants in the learning activities. <http://doing2learn.eu/en/learning-guide>  
Based on the methodology developed during the project, a course was created for those working with older learners. The course is accredited by Bangor University. <http://doing2learn.eu/en/doing2learn-course>

Another course "All is linked together in the web – How to communicate, manage and learn" for project managers and teaching staff to improve their managing and teaching methods: <http://ec.europa.eu/education/trainingdatabase/index.cfm?fuseaction=DisplayCourse&cid=25248> was created.

## **5. Impact and Sustainability**

The project envisaged reaching older generation and other individuals interested in the topics and learning modules developed and promoted. The learning products (communication and mentorship books, How-to courses, ICT courses, interviews with learners, research report, learning film and learning guide) are addressing both teachers, tutors, educational institutions and older generation. The main advantage of all these products and of the approach of involving older generation into the learning and teaching process is that they can be used by territorial, local municipal communities, association and non-profit companies working with seniors or with other disadvantaged groups. This is possible thanks to the designing manner of the web platform and materials. The web platform was designed as an open source, and it is available and accessible to all entities concerned. Also, the web platform is providing unlimited possibilities to get in contact with new people who have the same or different ideas. The whole learning process was documented through the research activity, interviews and learning guide. In this way, this good practice can be used for teachers, facilitators, tutors and educational institutions for further integration of older generation. And last, but not least the web platform can be continuously improved, and new courses and modules can be added, while the existing ones can be upgraded.

## 6. Educational Process

The project combined training and mentoring of seniors with the development of online course content by the same seniors. The 6 partners activating in 7 countries conducted activities with the target group at a local level, seniors participating in the project were identified and invited to participate mainly through another organisation – care centre, association, etc. The method used in relation to the target groups was the participative action research. Evidence about the way in which the process functioned is presented by four out of the six organisations; some of the reports point out very interesting characteristics of the collaboration with, motivation and re-engagement of seniors in learning. The groups underwent training on communication, mentoring and ICT, and, then, they were further assisted to develop the topics they chose for the online courses. The online courses were conceived to provide also an intercultural dimension of the learning process. The intercultural dimension was addressed in the activity which joined seniors from all groups under the umbrella of the European Learning Week, which took place in Wales, combining seminars, rural workshops, presentations and cultural visits. Some of the training activities for seniors were accredited by the UK partner, a University.

One important outcome of the project is the "**Learning Guide**", which is available only online via the website <http://doing2learn.eu/en/learning-guide>. It describes the detailed steps and methods used in the training courses within this project:

1. Valorisation of traditional knowledge traditional knowledge and practice was used as a 'hook' to capture the participants' interest in learning.
2. Informal training - different techniques were introduced, mentoring was suggested to the learners as a possibility to provide their expertise to less experienced people in order to help them in their career and interests. The topics of further workshops were communication techniques and styles, and communication in English. The contents of the workshops were based on the learners' experiences, personal interests and communication skills.
3. E-learning – learners had the possibility to improve their computer skills, and produce online-courses themselves.
4. Intercultural exchange - the topics covered in these how-to courses were based on the participants' interests and knowledge.