

# *Seniors Active in the Learning Community*

## **Recommendations addressed to cultural and educational organisations**



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## **Active Seniors Learn Educate Communicate and Transmit**

The ASLECT project - Active Seniors Learn, Educate, Communicate and Transmit (co-financed through Lifelong Learning Programme, KA4 – Dissemination and Exploitation of Results) aims at strengthening the capacity of cultural and educational organizations to offer a learning and communication environment favourable for seniors. The main objective is to use the educational results and experiences developed through other cooperation projects dedicated to seniors in order to help create opportunities for seniors to use their experiences/competencies and become adult educators for their peers and other interested groups in the specific settings offered by cultural organisations.

**TO WHOM:** This set of recommendations is addressed to managers of cultural and educational organisations, researchers in the field of education, culture and society, to decision-makers from the public administration, as well as to adult educators, trainers and facilitators.

**WHY:** The purpose of this material is to offer advice, recommendations and examples on how to involve seniors as learners, educators and transmitters of knowledge and skills and how to adapt the learning environments within cultural organisations to seniors' needs. The content relies on the expertise developed in the educational projects identified as good practice cases, as well as on the research conducted by the organizations implementing the ASLECT project.

## **European Policies for Seniors' Learning**

One of the effects of the current demographic change is that the risk of becoming socially excluded is rising, particularly among older people who left the labour market. Long-term unemployment and job insecurity are leading to increasing inequalities and poverty risks for many senior Europeans. In view of these issues, the social inclusion of the elderly and the strategies for promoting voluntary work among older people have a growing importance. This is emphasised by the fact that the European Commission declared 2011 the European Year of Volunteering and 2012 the European Year of Active Ageing.

**Recruitment of Older People as Volunteers** (and among them, those at risk of social exclusion) often requires some effort. Nevertheless, several factors facilitating their involvement are identified: in addition to reliable funding, the recruitment and retention strategies that are tailored to this group are important. However, the social inclusion of older people through volunteering has become a new challenge. There is still a general lack of political awareness with respect to the potential of older people.

Volunteering has also been recognised as a way of offering new learning opportunities to senior citizens and people with disabilities while giving them the possibility to help shape our societies. At the same time, voluntary activities can improve the understanding between generations, when the young and the old work together and support each other.

At the individual level, volunteering can be a means for citizens to acquire social skills, to have a useful role within social groups and to connect or re-connect with society. At the societal level, it can be a tool for the empowerment of people, especially for disadvantaged groups in society.

Main source: *Communication on EU Policies and Volunteering: Recognising and Promoting Crossborder Voluntary Activities in the EU*, 2011

Website: <http://europa.eu/volunteering/en/press-media/resources/212/32>

Promoting voluntary work among older people in Europe, particularly among those at risk, is one important goal on the EU political agenda. The European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion in 2010 explicitly and implicitly referred to older persons with the following two main objectives:

- to recognise the fundamental right of persons experiencing poverty and social exclusion to live in dignity and to take an active part in society;
- to promote public support for social inclusion policies, emphasising the collective and individual responsibility in combating poverty and social exclusion, and fostering commitment by all public and private actors.

It must be kept in mind that, as far back as 1994, the Council of Europe recommended that the Member States should take policy initiatives to prevent the social exclusion of older people by promoting their social integration (Council of Europe, 1994).

There is empirical evidence that the risk of being socially excluded increases with advanced age, and that this is especially true for older women, particularly very old and/or widowed women.

In searching for measures promoting the social inclusion of the older population who have already left the labour market, special attention has to be paid to measures encouraging volunteering. In this context, there is empirical evidence that volunteering in old age and/or civic engagement of older people might be a tool to fight social exclusion and, thus, to promote the social inclusion of the elderly population, as well as social cohesion and quality of life for all generations.

Main source: *Volunteering by older people in the EU*, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2011.

As mentioned, 2012 is the **European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations**, a chance to reflect on how Europeans are living longer and staying healthier than ever before — and to realise the existing opportunities. Active ageing can give tomorrow's older adults the opportunity to:

- stay in the workforce and share their experience;
- keep playing an active role in society;
- live as healthy and fulfilling lives as possible.

It is also the key for maintaining the solidarity between generations in societies with rapidly increasing numbers of older people. Active ageing is important not only for seniors, but for the other age groups of a society, and it constitutes a significant part of the social capital that a community can have. There are many strengths which can be brought by older persons as participants in the society, and we indicate only a few of such strengths: richness of experience, maturity in thinking and decision-making, in-depth expertise in various

professions and a number of skills that sometimes are about to be lost, although they constitute important cultural heritage.

The challenge for politicians and stakeholders will be to improve the opportunities for active ageing in general and for living independently, acting in areas as diverse as access to culture, employment, health care, social services, adult learning, volunteering, housing, IT services or transport.

The European Year seeks to raise awareness of the issues and the best ways of dealing with them. But most of all, it seeks to encourage all policymakers and stakeholders to set goals for themselves, and to take the required actions to meet them. 2012 should go beyond debating; it should start bringing tangible results.

Web site: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/ey2012.jsp?langId=en>

## Cultural Organisations and Seniors

On the general cultural agenda and in the public policies addressing the cultural sector, seniors occupy a rather modest place as compared to other social groups. Policy-makers and cultural operators have to be made more aware of the necessity to develop strategies and programmes for ensuring a larger participation of seniors to cultural life, as well as for fully using the seniors' cultural and educational potential. It is also a way of preparing themselves for the future, when it is estimated that seniors will constitute a much larger part of the society than today. Developing cultural, artistic and educational programmes **for** seniors becomes crucial in this perspective. Equally or even more important is the development of cultural, artistic and educational programmes **with** seniors, to their own benefit, but also to the benefit of other groups, especially youngsters and children.

Every individual is a vehicle for the culture that has formed him/her, and has contributed to his/her development. Sometimes seniors become the last carriers of such cultural elements; skills, memories and experiences disappear as they fade away from the public attention. It is part of the cultural organizations' public mission to support and promote the passing on of this intangible heritage within the communities they serve. But this is not to say that cultural organizations should have in view seniors only as keepers of the past. Creativity is for everyone and creativity feeds itself from experience. Developing the creativity of seniors, embedding it in the cultural offer as part of a specific artistic and cultural programme should also find a place on the agenda of today's and tomorrow's cultural organizations.

For cultural organizations and professionals searching for ways to prepare themselves for this task, we hope that the ideas, suggestions and recommendations presented hereinbelow will represent a useful resource and a trigger of inspiration. Its base is represented by the good practice cases and examples of cooperation projects in the field of education involving seniors from all over the European Union; these good practice cases and cooperation projects were identified and documented by the organizations carrying out ASLECT project.

## Methods and Tools

The purpose of this part is to provide recommendations on how to develop activities involving seniors, to ensure the transfer of skills and knowledge, and to create learning environments adequate for seniors. The following tips and suggestions are mainly coming from the experience gained by the coordinators of each best practice case identified, as well as from the research undertaken by ASLECT partners.

### Tools and Strategies to Motivate Seniors to Become Active within Their Own Community

In order to motivate seniors to participate in the training and become active in their own community, several aspects should be taken into account:

#### Focus on the Participants' Experience and Interests

As a basic principle, learners are providers of knowledge to at least the same extent as recipients of knowledge. The learning process, therefore, should be focused on the participants' experience and interests. To the extent that participants are trained to offer information, guidance and advice about services, facilities and support available to other senior citizens in their hometown or region, the programme should offer them an opportunity to reflect on the good and bad examples of guiding they have experienced themselves, and thus to help them choose their own favourite methods.

Psychological research shows that seniors get active and involved when they see a meaning in what they are doing. They become very interested when the subject is connected to their personal concerns. The tools to be used have to be adapted to the seniors' needs, *e.g.* an easy-to-use web 2.0 environment with a weblog for storytelling. ICT tools should not be used as a learning purpose; instead, they should rather be used in connection with a motivating subject. An example of a successful method for introducing ICT to seniors is to build "tandems" of seniors and juniors, where seniors can share their life experiences while juniors can assist them, for instance, in using new technologies.

#### Self-Directed-Learning

A significant role in the learning process can be played by study circles: self-organised "circles of interest" of people who meet outside the programme agenda. Developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Scandinavia, study circles were an important vehicle of non-formal adult education initiatives undertaken in this purpose by Nikolai Grundtvig. People who share common interests typically create study circles; there is no trainer or teacher: one member usually acts as a facilitator to keep the exchange of ideas and information flowing, and makes sure that everyone has an opportunity to get involved.

According to a survey conducted by RSVP (Retired Seniors Volunteers Programme), in the UK in the early 1990s, most seniors who did not volunteer said that they had not been asked. Asking seniors personally to become active because there is a need for their specific experiences and skills is one of the best strategies for motivating them to take on a task in their community.

### **Informal Learning**

Informal learning responds intelligently and flexibly to the specific needs of the elderly in accordance with their specific situations and with their practical needs. Therefore, most of the learning and teaching happens outside the formal setting of a classroom.

Many seniors like to engage in community work. However, most of the times, they have no idea about the existing possibilities, frameworks, contacts, etc. Therefore, a simple advertising campaign as for any other “product” (*e.g.* in the local newspapers) might help.

A “Bring-a-Friend” campaign can be useful, motivating seniors who were already engaged to bring other seniors from their private network who were not yet engaged in any kind of community work.

Taking part in volunteering activities which take place in many districts of the cities is also a good way to remain active and to offer a service very required by the local community.

### **Transnational Exchanges of Senior Volunteers**

This might be one of the possible tools that motivate seniors to take part in the community life, though it may seem a paradox – going abroad to be active at home. It can be a matter of providing new and unusual learning opportunities. Intercultural learning, intergenerational learning and development of soft skills are the main “subjects” taught at this strange “university”: do senior citizens need to be trained or refreshed on these topics? The world is changing so quickly that in a few years we have seen the greatest economic crisis, huge migration flows and a development in the way information goes with the internet and the new technologies.

We all need to understand and handle these issues, both for ourselves and for seniors, because seniors will always have to do with younger people and it is necessary to develop correct relationships between the two age groups. This is the reason why we need to know and understand the world in order to be active in our “local” dimension, to fight racism, fears of differences, xenophobia and to favour social solidarity and cohesion.

### **Workshops and Seminars**

In order to motivate seniors to become active in their community another interesting tool is a set of workshops enabling older people to reflect on their skills and experience, gain information on the possibilities to become active in their community and to develop an action plan. Also, another possibility is to develop a Peer facilitator training in order to enable seniors to run workshops themselves. For this purpose, it is important to:

- Know your target audience;
- Ask them what their interests are;
- Listen to what they have to say;
- Make the project appealing;
- Make the project relevant;
- Introduce new ideas one at a time;
- Keep it simple.

### **Cultural Vehicles for Learning**

Involvement in artistic activities is a great way to learn and develop skills. Community arts or community-based art is a form of art deeply concerned with disadvantaged groups, aiming to offer them the possibility to address and express concerns related to their context through an

artistic process. Community arts can provide seniors with an opportunity of active involvement which is very much oriented towards their own problems and interests. The development of specific cultural and artistic programmes with and for seniors, conducted by professional artists, has the potential to activate seniors, as well as to create a genuine engagement in the learning processes that accompany the artistic act; however, it also raises awareness within the community, since arts have always offered powerful communication tools.

## **Creating the Learning Environment for Seniors**

The creation of learning opportunities for seniors requires specific and adequate tools and methodologies, in both traditional and online environments. The cultural and educational organisations working on projects with seniors are very different, so the learning environments they create are different too. The volunteers' organisations offer learning through volunteering, and they also offer training for volunteers; such organizations represent relevant examples of flexible learning environments for children, youngsters, adults and elders.

Please find hereinbelow a series of recommendations and advice on how to implement such initiatives; these recommendations are mainly resulting from the direct experience of working with seniors acquired by those organisations which carried out educational projects.

- It is relevant to make sure that learners have an easy and intuitive handling of the learning environment, and to offer an interesting and motivating subject which attracts their interest. For instance, a weblog environment where seniors could tell stories about history experienced on a personal level. Other seniors from several European countries could read and comment the stories. The detailed user guide provided to learners proved to be crucial in the development of the learning process and a stable support for the use of the weblog environment.
- In order to motivate seniors to get involved and meet the demand for fair access to lifelong learning also for the elderly, age-specific obstacles must be removed. The organizers of the programmes should consider the requirements and preferences of the target groups in relation to:
  - The timing of the training: older people prefer trainings that take place in the morning or early afternoons.
  - The training venue: participants have to feel confident with the venue. People who are not religious, for instance, do not feel attracted by trainings that take place in a parish house. Therefore, training providers must choose places which do not generate any rejection reactions and which are also accessible by means of public transport.
  - Costs: Trainings free of charge for all participants can help attract socially disadvantaged groups, as well.

*Case: The SEVEN project created a group of about 20-25 senior volunteers who, since 2001, have been participating in senior exchanges abroad: they gave shape to a potential senior volunteering programme which became reality in 2008. This group contributed in*

*writing the handbooks about seniors' volunteering, and provided a lot of feedback from their real experience. They took part in many public meetings to witness about their experience that they became a sort of trainers even if most of them did not realize it. As a group, they have helped a lot lately with the organisation of incoming senior volunteers from abroad. This represents a continuous challenge: each time, they have to make the effort to relate themselves to the different situations connected with volunteers coming from or going abroad, and then deal with totally different living environments.*

- Keep learning sessions short to avoid people getting tired too soon. Mix in-class learning with self-organised group works, trips, general social activities (*e.g.* visits to cultural events, exhibitions, etc., dealing with the educational programme topic and/or community work etc.).

*Case: According to the internal evaluation of the SENIOR-GUIDE project, the typical senior learner guide is female, although the share of men in some of the countries subject to the study, especially the UK, indicates that this voluntary work area, with its conceptual, self-organised and coordinative functions, can be of high interest for men as well. People between 50 and 69 years of age are especially attracted by this work, as well as the seniors in their 70-ies.*

- Some general advice on making educational and cultural programmes with seniors (some reported in the PALADIN project Memorandum):
  - Use training for seniors in presentation and public speaking skills.
  - Topics of interest for seniors are issues of mobility, hearing and sight issues and how to deal with those situations.
  - Allow the exchange of ideas and knowledge within the group and create an opportunity to do so within monthly meetings after the end of the part dedicated to guiding seniors.
  - Ongoing monthly training and input from local experts and enthusiasts should be provided.
  - Maintain cohesion within the group with various social activities.
  - Choices should be given to learners over what, how and when to learn (a learner doesn't have to fit the 'program'; the 'program' has to fit the learner).
  - Adult learners' developmental needs should be respected.
  - Individual differences should be considered.
  - Learners' pace should be respected: self-paced learning is an opportunity to progress at a much faster or slower rate, depending on each learner. Each one needs his/her time.
  - Flexible attendance schedules should be offered.
  - Friendly and enjoyable learning environment should be created.
  - Accessibility barriers should be removed.
  - Learners' interdependency should be fostered.

## Stimulating Organisations to Involve and Empower Seniors at Local and National Levels

How to stimulate organizations to empower seniors? The following is a set of “golden rules” aiming to provide tips and suggestions on different ways and approaches to achieve an efficient involvement of seniors at local and national levels.

**1. Building up networks** of all the stakeholders involved in the scenario. Policy-makers, seniors’ organisations, adult training centres, associations for intergenerational learning have to collaborate in order to involve senior end users. One example is given by the SENIOR-GUIDE project, which set up Regional Networking Platforms, including seniors & migrant organizations, politicians, stakeholders, experts and representatives of the target group at a regional level.

Platforms are structures seeking to make sure that results and dissemination materials are tailored to the needs and interests of the target groups; to attract potential training participants and cooperation partners, and pursue a sustainability-strategy from the very beginning. Furthermore, it turned out to be a good way of raising awareness among relevant stakeholders, and to motivate them to improve the integration of older people.

**2. Valuing the experiences of seniors** and making them feel needed in the society; removing all the negative stereotypes about older people. It is important that money is invested by policy-makers to break through such stereotypes and demonstrate that older people are not only consumers, but also providers of public goods. At the same time, seniors’ organizations should be given an opportunity, *inter alia* by means of training offers, to defend the rights and show the potential of older people.

**3. Gathering the support of local governments** and the networking at a local level is essential: local governments, educational organizations at all levels, social, cultural and environmental associations together with trade unions and all the expressions of the civil society at a local level must gather and work together not only **for**, but rather **with** senior citizens. Local governments may take on a lead role in coordinating all these forces. Policy-makers should supply funding, and help raise citizen’s awareness on these issues; however, organisations also need to make commitments and change their structures in order to allow for real participation and empowerment.

**4. Creating a public “matching office”** where the “demand” (organisations interested to have support from senior citizens) can match the “supply” (seniors interested in community work) under standardized conditions. In the organizations where most seniors are employed, it would be necessary to take into account the creation of real strategies for them, based on the valorisation of human capital and on the creation of individual pathways which make senior aware of their opportunities. This concerns all sectors and, above all, the public administration. Policy-makers, decision-makers and educational organizations are all responsible for the creation of such pathways.

**5. Setting up legal frameworks** for such cooperation works to inform organizations and senior citizens properly (*e.g.* responsibilities and insurance in case of accidents; tax issues in

case small amounts are paid or expenses are refunded, etc.). Raising awareness in relation to these issues is important, as well as is always the financial support provided to those organisations wishing to involve and empower seniors. All actors need to pitch in to support active ageing. It is important to convince the stakeholders that this project will improve the participants' well-being, that it will make their town look good, and that it will bring publicity to decision-makers.

Sometimes, it is important to be aware of two different situations related to seniors: those who are still in the labour market have an easier access to training, usually provided by their employers or by private and public companies, for free, under the ESF. The same situation (free access to training) applies to unemployed seniors. On the other hand, those seniors who are out of the labour market have different options for informal/non-formal education. Most education courses and activities need to be paid, but -for instance, in Portugal- municipalities usually provide a "senior card" to 65+ citizens; this card allows them to have access to cultural and leisure activities at low cost (some for free). Most seniors rather attend the courses provided by seniors' universities (usually, for a symbolic fee – around 5 Euro per month), while very few attend the courses organized by "normal" universities, which provide them with special programmes.

## **Transferring Activities and Methodologies to Other Institutions and Contexts**

One of the key results for any initiative and material is the possibility to transfer and adapt the outputs to other institutions and other contexts.

For instance, the *HISTORY* project transferred activities and methodologies to various target groups (e.g. within the Leonardo project EXPERTS, offering a web 2.0 learning environment for professionals working in the field of early childhood education). They also plan to develop further projects for seniors in connection with their personal experiences in history.

Within the *SENIOR-GUIDE* project, the participants in the pilot trainings from all the partner countries were encouraged to find cooperation partners interested to support their work and help them in public relations matters. The initiatives organized in Graz (Austria) and Rome (Italy) are cooperating with institutions such as the main library, the main regional hospital, the seniors' club, day care centres for older people and supermarkets. In fact, there are some particular plans to transfer the Senior-Guides Training to other institutions and settings: the partners from Germany intend to develop a combination of the Senior-Guides project and the existing Start Helfer Plus-project. The aims of the project are to attract more and more elderly people, and to establish a cooperation relationship between volunteers and organizations.

The methods of the *SenEmpower* project consisted in the cooperation among local authorities, seniors' organizations and educational bodies in connection with a specific local target group at risk of or threatened by social exclusion. All parties were involved in developing a curriculum for senior volunteers: the educational body provided the training, while the participants developed solutions and put them in place with the support of the local authority.

This concept worked in a sustainable way, and it can be transferred to other locations and organizations.

The *SEVEN* network aimed at transferring senior volunteering abroad: from 2008 this is an opportunity open to all seniors of all ages through their organizations. Dozens of organizations in Europe have benefitted so far of this funding, and it seems that many more will do so in the near future.

The *SLIC* project workshops are currently being trialled by other organisations in Austria and Finland. The work done in SLIC II aims at transferring the SLIC I and II tools to other institutions and other countries. Organizations from countries like Spain, which have not been involved in the SLIC concept until now, have expressed their interest in this project.

Finally, the *University Volunteer* Tour Guides idea could be used in other places at a small scale (tours of the local area for people from other areas, groups, communities) and at a larger scale - approaching universities & local government and suggesting a guiding project to places of interest. In this way, the volunteers will be those who are interested in a specific topic, as well as in the training; they will be interested in learning more through their own research; they will be keen on sharing their knowledge with their peers (other guides), and with their audiences.

## **Recommendations and Suggestions for Educational and Cultural Organisations Working with Seniors**

Experiences and competences collected by the people who worked in the field may prove to be very helpful for the implementation of similar activities. This chapter shows the main suggestions and recommendations, divided per category and subject.

### **Finding Suitable Participants**

- An information meeting before the start of the training is a good way to get people interested. In this respect, it is important to plan enough time for the recruitment of the participants.
- It is a good idea to interview each participant before the start of the training. This will help inform the participants about their responsibilities, and about the intensity degree of the training.
- Another suggestion to make sure that the participants really want to take part in the project is to sign a contract between the organisation and the volunteer.
- An article in the local press about the project may get people interested.
- It can be very important to cooperate with an association that is already working for and with older volunteers.
- However you may find your volunteers, they should be a mixed-profile group, with different backgrounds and different ages.
- Flexible structures can allow for real participation and empowerment, to open up to welcome seniors from all walks of life, as well as to encourage them to engage and

learn in other organisations and not only their own organization. Active learning environments are important for opening one's ears to hear seniors' voices.

### **Trainers: What Competences and Characteristics are Needed?**

- Specialist trainers are preferable.
- Communication skills are very important; they should be friendly and clear on the tasks.
- A mix between older and younger trainers seems to be one key to a successful training.
- If external trainers are involved, it is important to brief them on the project and on the participants' needs, and to inform them about the expected outcomes.
- Trainers should always make sure to keep the participants informed.
- Do not use a top-down method of communication with the participants.
- Experience, coolness and the sense of humour are very important skills for trainers.
- Trainers should know how to manage difficult situations.
- Keep in mind the needs of this specific target group. Try to be creative, reflective and not to hurry.
- Be aware of the language you are using, for example with regard to abbreviations or technical terms.

### **Communication with Seniors**

- It is important to understand the possible motivations of potential senior learners and facilitators.
- English expressions can create confusion sometimes; try to avoid them inasmuch as possible.
- Use a respectful way of communication, recognize their competencies and autonomies.
- Seniors are different from other people due to their rich and lifelong experiences which should be taken into account. In any other respect, they are not so very different from others: they are individuals with very specific wants and needs.
- Telephone calls are sometimes more welcomed than emails, especially if not everyone uses the internet.
- It is very important to keep in mind that seniors want to be taken seriously.
- In some cases, seniors are more used to a setting in which someone gives them a lecture and a lot of input.
- Be aware of the different group dynamics that will emerge. If there are any conflicts or problems, try to carry out a group activity to find out about the relationships between each other.
- Ask the participants for their feedback.
- Experiment new ideas, sharing the knowledge acquired and enjoying the experience.
- Seniors are very critical as regards what they want or do not want to spend their time on. Make sure to meet seniors' interests and motifs when you intend to work with them – select topics and objectives when working with seniors, and be open and frank to them.

### **Placing Seniors in the Position of Trainers, Learning Facilitator, Mentors**

- Seniors are more receptive to information coming from other seniors, so creating a corpus of seniors-mentors as collaborators/volunteers is a key to the success of programmes aiming to “sell” ideas which are difficult to pass on.
- Seniors in the role of mentors/learning facilitators/trainers can provide valuable input for programmes addressed not only to their peers, but also to other groups.
- It is important to prepare the seniors for such roles, to explain them the purpose of their actions and involvement.

### **Methods: Useful Tools for Older People**

- No matter what method you choose, please make sure you think about some specifics for older people. For example: use big letters if you are writing something, speak slowly and loud, give participants enough time to follow you, use less PowerPoint presentations and more handouts; it also helps to keep the agenda visible for them at all times.
- Pretty much all methods work for older people as well; they are very interested in and open-minded to them, but they just put attach different names to the methods.
- Focus on subjects and themes in which seniors are interested to offer them an encouraging learning environment.
- A good mix of a theoretical input and activities for self-directed learning is a useful method. Therefore, it is necessary to explain the “self-directed-learning” concept to the participants at the very beginning of the training.
- Favour the intergenerational work, and try to overcome the age barriers: senior citizens, just like everybody else, can be helpful and may need help.
- Working groups, as well as role-playing games are really good methods for training seniors.
- Find appropriate evaluation methods, for example: EDAM ([www.edam-evaluation.eu](http://www.edam-evaluation.eu)).
- Use best-practice examples.
- Choose activities in which the participants could find out their strengths and encourage them to get involved.
- Pay attention to individual pathways for senior enhancement and valorisation, creating tools which can help them in everyday life, in community and at work.

### **Schedule**

- Plan enough time for the trainings and for the duration while you are in classroom.
- The program should be sent out to participants in advance.
- Change the number of the training days, if necessary.
- Be clear in what you are saying.
- Plan enough breaks and be flexible in your planning of the training.
- Consider possible drop-outs if the time span between sessions is too long.

## **Cooperation with Public Authorities/Organisations**

- You need to demonstrate that you are supporting one of their priorities rather than inventing something new.
- It is helpful to brief the participants before they first approach any potential partners for cooperation. To this end, you can prepare written information about the project.
- Ask other trainers if they have important contacts.
- Advocate for the involvement of organisations representing seniors in the public dialogue, and debate over policies and over the creation of the mechanism allowing their involvement (of course, in the places where such a mechanism doesn't exist).

## **Coaching**

- The time for coaching must be flexible, the more demanding the project is, the more likely is the necessity for coaching.
- Be aware of the various challenges you could face, for example the age-gap.
- People could have the feeling that the need for support suggests a lack of competency; try to point out that this is not the case.
- Sometimes, what is needed is not a coach, but a mediator.
- It is helpful to contact them actively if there are any conflicts, rather than wait for them to come to you.
- Maybe you should use another term in your language, which would work better for the target group instead of coaching.

## **Public Relations**

- When trying to advertise the idea to other organisations, you need to be clear about the benefits they may gain from their involvement.
- Advertisements in local newspapers, online or on different websites can be a good way to inform about the project.
- Sometimes it can be helpful to look for political support in order to be more successful with public relations.
- Make sure you find a good balance between “new” and “old” media to get the attention of a broad audience.
- Promote cooperation programmes and their results in order to increase participation of cultural organisations and to strengthen their learning dimension.

## **Keeping Learners Actively Involved in the Exploitation**

- Use helpful experiences you already gained in other projects.
- Try to build close cooperation relationships among participants, for example with informal sessions/moments in which they can exchange thoughts.
- Take pictures of the activities.
- Show active appreciation by saying “Thank you”. Tools for that could be a birthday call or a little present to honour the involvement.
- Ask the seniors what kind of support they would need to keep them actively involved.

- Practice a regular contact, support and provide resources so they should enjoy coming to you again.
- Commitment to specific tour ideas will help with their active involvement, to establish the tours as a schedule proposal.
- Have fun working together with seniors and show enthusiasm.
- Consider intergenerational work.
- Be aware of physical difficulties older people may have, as well as of people's other commitments.
- A micro-funding scheme (at a national or regional level) for the educational projects conducted by cultural organisations and dedicated to seniors could be a way in which significant results can be obtained by means of few resources.

### **Sustainability from the Very Beginning**

- Suitable participants are the key to a sustainable project.
- A good contact with the authorities, various organisations and institutions from the town or village is very important.
- Try to identify the organisations appropriate for a possible cooperation.
- Evaluate the activities and the learning, and act on the feedback.
- For countries that have an Adult Learners' Week, an event during the week is a good way for sustainability.
- Furthermore, it is important to focus more on the period following the project, and to find out who wants to dedicate what amount of time to the activities developed.
- The activities should be repeatable, and their feasibility should be suitable for the target group.
- You should try to find and maintain your personal motivation and pleasure in what you are doing.
- Very few cultural organisations have a distinctive policy/strategy addressing seniors; the development of such a policy/strategy by every cultural organisation should be advocated for.

## National Priorities and Policies

This section presents those public national policies in the educational, cultural and social fields which are considered positive and supportive of learning for seniors in general, and within cultural organizations in particular.

### Austria

The Austrian policy for senior citizens and voluntary work focuses on people including their skills and resources. Thus, the Austrian policy for senior citizens and voluntary work sets measures including the following:

- Promotion and assurance for the elderly to participate in social, economic and cultural life e.g.
  - Bundesseniengesetz (Federal senior citizens law) (<http://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=10001535>)
  - Landes-Seniorenbeirat (provincial advisory council for senior citizens) : Because of the legally stipulated instalment of a 'Landes-Seniorenbeirat' the co-determination of senior citizens in all decision-making processes on a provincial level is ensured. The task of the Landes-Seniorenbeirat is to advise the provincial government in all matters concerning the interests of senior citizens (<http://www.burgenland.at/gesundheitssoziales/seniorenfoerderung>)
  - Promotion of pilot projects e.g. senior-citizen-friendly community.
- Promotion of life-long-learning to adapt to continuous changes caused by new knowledge and technologies and needed to meet today's demands and challenges as well as changes that are necessary for the possibility to participate in social life and for leading a self-determined life-style into ripe old age.
- Promotion of active aging. Education, social security, advancement in the medial field and a well-functioning health system for its implementation e.g. by supporting equal opportunity projects and projects of participation, measures against violence towards the elderly, the national quality certificate for retirement homes in Austria (NQZ) as well as measures governing the promotion and support of volunteers.

Source: [http://www.bmask.gv.at/site/Soziales/Seniorinnen\\_und\\_Senioren/](http://www.bmask.gv.at/site/Soziales/Seniorinnen_und_Senioren/)

### Germany

The question of how to better integrate senior citizens into society and of how to convert the problem of a demographic change into a chance are topics actively discussed in the German society and government.

Today's main aim of the German government is to change the image of senior citizens as people in need of care and help into the image of an active, vital person contributing to society. Based on this image, the efforts of the state aim at enabling this target group to live their life independently and to profit from society as well as be a profit for society at the same time. These principles are realized in national policies which are especially focused on using the potentials of senior citizens in the economy and the civil society.

To meet the goal of integrating the potentials of senior citizens into the economy, the government in cooperation with companies develops programs and practices to keep older people integrated into work-processes of their companies and to profit from their knowledge. Together with human resources departments, ideas are developed of how to create a working environment that suits the needs of senior citizens and makes it possible to use their knowledge and experience for the company.

Integrating the potentials of senior citizens into the civil society is a point of special importance in the efforts of the German state. Making use of their potentials and experience and creating a link between different generations are driving most of the national policies regarding senior citizens. Projects established to meet these aims are for example “Mehrgenerationenhäuser” - houses, in which several generations meet and plan projects together - and “Freiwilligendienste aller Generationen”, a project which ended in 2011 and aimed at establishing a network and policies for volunt work for all generations in society.

Lifelong learning is the key to prosperity and growth – this statement of the German government points out that the German policies on senior citizens are not only supposed to be beneficiary for the economy and the society, but also for the senior citizens themselves. Being integrated into the economy and the society until a high age is supposed to help senior citizens stay vital and be challenged every day.

Social offers for senior citizens in Germany are organized rather decentralized. Many different organizations and groups, e. g. the German Red Cross or Caritas, are offering activities for and by senior citizens. The state supports these projects in an ideal and financial manner. Projects introduced by the state, e. g. “Aktiv im Alter”, are set up to find guidelines for establishing offers for senior citizens and integrating them into the society.

A new challenge for the German state and the organizations themselves is to better link up activities for senior citizens and improve a more coherent system.

## **Italy**

In Italy, a great number of proposals and episodic actions have been generated lately by workers, enterprises and institutions in relation to an active life for seniors, even if they haven't been linked to a general and widespread strategy.

During the next years, it will be necessary to outline a medium and long-term strategy in order to successfully act on this important theme for future wellness in Italy. This strategy has to involve civil services, national and local social partners and to promote instruments, targeted actions and active policies in order to virtuously link the needs of stakeholders, first of all, of the enterprises and workers.

It's not sufficient to deal only with the increase in the retirement age limit, unless it is possible to create conditions in which employers would want to recruit older workers and in which workers would be more motivated to continue their labour life.

The European countries which successfully extended the term of the working life (Finland, Denmark, Netherlands and the United Kingdom), adopted a global and holistic approach based on their public and organizational policies, in order to allow for a safer and more active ageing, as well as for a correct management of the final working period.

In these years, the enterprises' attitude towards older workers is slowly changing, and only in part; to better outline the operative initiatives, this research describes the study-cases of organizations which consciously face the ageing of their workforce.

They try to foresee the crisis through innovative strategies and proceedings, constant improvement projects, career planning and management of intergenerational succession, involving also older workers in accordance with their particular characteristics.

This investigation reveals that there is no unique approach to age management; nonetheless, it is possible to identify certain primary dimensions by means of which enterprises can manage the issue related to the age of their workforce. For every dimension, it is possible to describe examples of good practises. However, in order to obtain better results, it is necessary to operate on more dimensions simultaneously.

Main source: *Le politiche aziendali per l'age management*, ISFOL 2008.

## **Romania**

In the last years, due to reforms in the social security system and to the extension of retirement age in Romania, there is a growing interest in terms of public policies for this segment of the population. National development plans and reforms in the public domain for 2007–2010-2013 include references and define the general directions to be pursued, as well as the measures to be taken in relation to seniors, mainly as far as their social rights and benefits are concerned, but also in regard of their access to education. One such measure (positive and promising) is included in the Law of National Education from 2011, in which a distinctive article mentioned that the Ministry of Education is responsible, together with the Ministry of Culture, for the elaboration of policies on the non-vocational education of adults and seniors. At the moment, the law is too recent, too new to be able to see any concrete follow-ups; however, it is worth mentioning as a potential lobby and advocacy tool. Another element that can be evaluated as positive is the creation - with the purpose of supporting the seniors' participation in the development of the social services system - of a new organisation, the National Board of Seniors. In a study made in 2009 - "The Social Rights of Romanian Seniors in the Context of EU Integration"-, the National Board of Seniors is taking notice of the positive measures adopted by Romanian authorities, but also of the gaps existing in the national legislation (there is no framework law for the protection of seniors, and there are no actual/concrete measures in the direction of active ageing and securing jobs for seniors). Access to continuous education and participation in the community life are among the global directions of action promoted by the National Board of Seniors. The existence of an organisation with the distinctive role of representing seniors at the national and international levels, which could be a partner of dialogue with the authorities is a positive element, although it is difficult to evaluate how efficient can such an organisation be in achieving its mission.

In addition to the relations described above, we can estimate that seniors are currently perceived and treated in Romania mainly as beneficiaries of social services. The main "access gates" to this group are represented by the public bodies at the county and municipality levels. There are several types of other organisations which have a degree of constancy in interacting with seniors and offering them support, including assistance in and services for learning. These are: private non-profit organisations (NGOs), some of them might be affiliated to a church, but not necessarily; public cultural institutions like libraries, and sometimes, as in one case we have identified (Vârsta 4), individuals or informal groups who are interested in

interacting and learning together with seniors. The attitude of public authorities towards cooperation with other organisations and institutions is generally open, as these latter partners are willing to offer services which cannot be provided by public authorities themselves. However, at the same time, such partners do not always have the capacity to enter a dialogue and create a cooperation relationship with other providers of social, educational and cultural services.

Cultural organisations have many opportunities to strengthen their learning dimension, if we are to refer to the possibilities to directly participate in European cooperation programmes (in culture, education, society and citizenship, and many others), as well as to access and exploit results from projects and cooperation actions conducted by other organisations. At the national level, although the funding is scarce, the National Cultural Fund is financing projects focusing on cultural education, without excluding or giving priority to certain social groups. Projects targeting seniors could receive funding as well, if they are proposed by organisations. One significant change occurred in the field of public libraries, as a consequence of the Global Libraries Programme implemented in Romania, as well. Whereas the programme included training for librarians with respect to adult education methods and micro-funded community-oriented projects, county libraries got involved with seniors, and developed educational and cultural projects. Other interesting cases come from the field of immaterial heritage, where - through the Living Human Treasures programme- seniors that possess a special skill are valorised and used also as promoters of the preservation of traditions.

No large-scale scheme for cooperation can be identified in Romania between the public authorities responsible for the social services provided to seniors, on the one hand, and other actors, on the other hand. The situation is different on a town-by-town, and region-by-region basis. One possible recommendation is to create such large-scheme for cooperation, maybe in the form of a programme encouraging the cooperation among public authorities, NGOs and cultural institutions. Such a scheme would be even more useful in the rural area, where associative life is very poor (so few service providers), and the seniors' access to education and culture is even more difficult.

## **Turkey**

Providing seniors with opportunities to express themselves and actively participate in the community life are key elements in supporting seniors' learning. In Turkey, adult education centres at county and municipality levels provide such opportunities. Seniors, usually retired professionals, attend the courses offered by these adult learning centres. There are also senior citizens' centres established in most of the cities in order to provide home care for senior citizens. There are social and cultural activities organized in these centres for senior citizens. However, all these courses and activities are usually organized in a top-down approach. Usually, seniors are never asked to express their opinions and needs. These adult centres and adult courses support learning for seniors in a limited way.

Public authorities and local governments work together with NGOs and other seniors' organizations in most of the cases.

Positive relationships in support of seniors' learning can be identified as various partnership arrangements (with different cultural institutions, senior centres and NGOs), taking place in various settings (such as schools, communities, cultural organisations), in various fields of

interaction and learning (such as media competence, housing, volunteering, health promotion, environmental education, etc), on different scales (at community, regional, national, European, and international levels), and addressing the common challenges faced by European societies (such as social inclusion, employability, and sustainability).

For cultural organizations to strengthen their learning dimension, they need to be more open to the seniors' needs and ideas. Seniors should be able to use cultural organizations as learning centres, and cultural organizations should also use seniors as learning resources for their peers.

The organization of cultural events, courses and activities together with and for seniors can strengthen the learning dimension of cultural organizations. The promotion of volunteering among seniors and the creation of an intergenerational learning environment for both seniors and youngsters can also contribute to the society's becoming more inclusive as far as seniors are concerned.