



Final Recommendations from the **U.N.I.C** Learning Partnership





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1. Who benefits from adult learning? Wider effects of learning

The U.N.I.C. partnership enabled adult learners to make contact with other learners in other countries. During these learning processes the partners observed effects which, for example, showed an open minded approach towards group dynamics, the willingness to communicate with people who are not known and the readiness to deal with new settings and unknown organisations, and an increased awareness of a common Europe.

In our daily practice we are aware of the benefits beyond the subject actually studied, namely about wider benefits of learning. Not only do we observe the individual benefits from adults learning, but we see effects on society and also effects towards a better understanding of others and towards social cohesion.

There is increasing importance to discuss these effects more precisely and to support them with evidence. Lifelong Learning can only be evaluated effectively when the broadness of learning and the wider benefits of learning are known. It is important to quantify these wider benefits because we notice that recently learning is often defined as formal learning and training for employability. These reflect only one part of learning and can lead to an unequal allocation of public support.

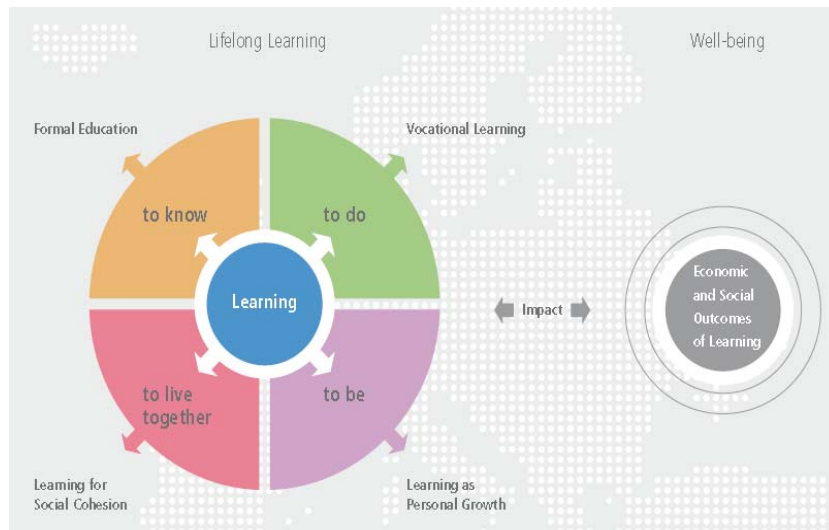
This chapter gives a small overview of research concerning the wider benefits of learning.

1.1 Four pillars of Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning is crucial in Europe for employability, for each individual's quality of life, personal development and integration. The **European Lifelong Learning Indicators (ELLI)** reflect an understanding of lifelong learning which deals with all the needs and interests of a person through a whole lifetime. The indicators based on the UNECSO approach written in the report of the International Commission on Education under the Leadership of Jacques Delors: "Learning: The Treasure Within", published in 1996. Herein four pillars of lifelong learning are identified: "learning to know," "learning to do," "learning to live together" and "learning to be."

ELLI traces back to the works of the Canadian Council of Learning which has developed the Composite Lifelong Learning Index, mapping an understanding of learning which is more than formal learning or learning for employability. Lifelong and lifewide learning focus on the whole person and

include the individual personality and his/her participation in society and it deals with cohesion. Lifelong and lifewide learning enable to develop the own potential, includes personal well-being as well as it gives a basis to bring out new talents. Learning is multidimensional.



‘Learning to know’ involves the development of the skills and knowledge required to meet the demands of everyday life, including reading, writing, critical thinking and a general education. A broad general education provides the foundation needed for exploring a smaller number of disciplines in more detail. In a sense, this also involves learning how to learn, to be able to benefit from the opportunities offered by lifelong learning.

‘Learning to do’ refers to the acquisition of skills that can be applied in practice. In many cases this means professional qualifications, such as IT training, management seminars and vocational education. It also includes competences that can be transferred to new, often unforeseeable situations.

‘Learning to live together’ involves the development of such qualities as respect and empathy, as well as social and interpersonal skills. Here the aim is to develop an intercultural and intergenerational understanding of other people and their history, traditions and spiritual values, so that joint efforts can be made to resolve conflicts peacefully.

Learning to be refers to activities that further each individual's physical, mental and spiritual growth. This means developing good judgment, independence and a sense of responsibility. Every aspect of each individual's potential must be cultivated to that end."

1.2 The wider benefits of learning

"Scientists see learning as a central and key factor in the development of individual and community social capital. In numerous studies, they have shown first, that the degree and extent of education and lifelong willingness to learn will have a decisive influence on how well people are able to develop, care for and expand social networks, and second, the extent to which social networks within a society open up to people and allow heterogeneity. All of which has decisive effects for the quality and vitality of community life."

A growing number of investigations on the wider benefits of learning, of lifelong and lifewide learning is dealing with important questions on the effects of learning on the development of identity, self-consciousness, motivation and resilience:

"(...) our ability to continually adjust to changing living conditions? How does learning affect our health, life expectancy and birth rate? Or, to take just one example, our ability to come to grips with an increasingly complicated healthcare system? What forms of learning result in greater well-being, greater life satisfaction and happiness? And what are the effects of learning processes on social cohesion and vitality – in neighborhoods and associations, municipalities, regions and whole societies? To what extent does learning influence personal willingness to integrate, be tolerant, show solidarity and become politically and socially engaged? And what factors can best improve the framework conditions and circumstances for every form of learning at every age?"

The results of these studies indicate that social cohesion, individual and economic development can also be seen in a context with the wider effects of learning and also in a context with learning in adult education. But: Also the Matthew-effect can be observed - the higher the educational attainment of people, the wider the effects and benefits of learning can be seen.

1.3 Self-confidence, self-concepts and the meaning of learning for adults

Adults report increases in confidence associated with learning. Adult learners take on more active social roles, they try out new things, tackle issues and do not ignore them. Some learners progress and take additional courses and apply for jobs or visit places they would not otherwise have visited,

such as, art galleries, museums and libraries and travel abroad. Informal adult learning is associated with social benefits.

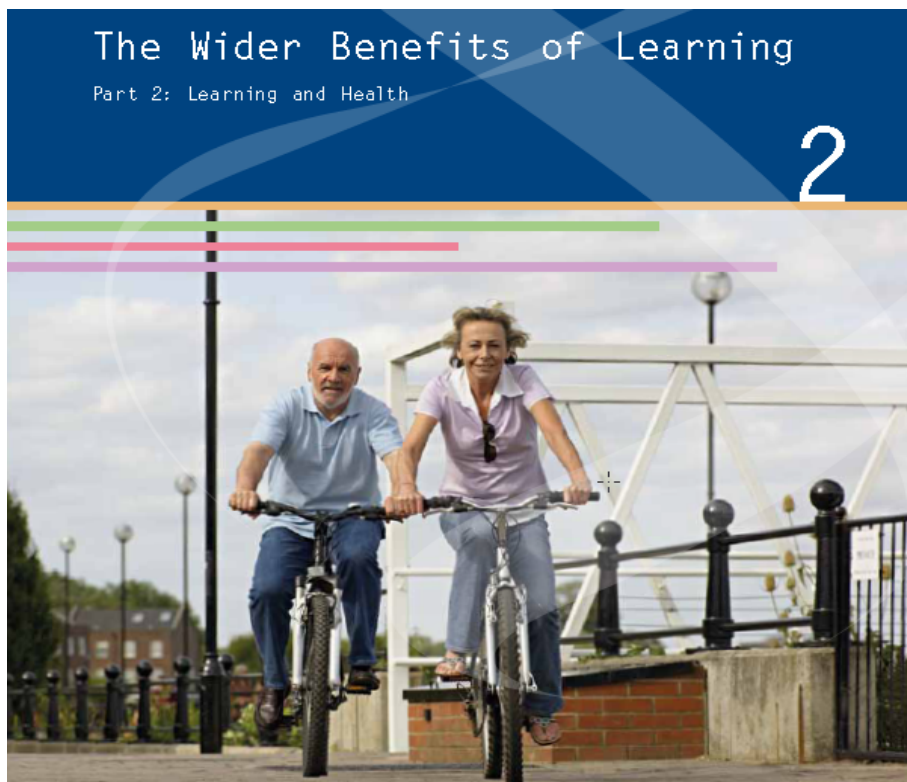
It is important that the content of learning is meaningful to the learner. In many studies respondents

“both genders, all ages, every ethnic background, every occupational class, all levels of previous education, and living in families or households of every kind mentioned that they had experienced increased self-esteem (...) as an outcome of learning at some point during their life.”

The outcomes were like self-awareness, doing something for oneself with purpose and hope, a clearer sense of identity, the capacity to think independently, improved skills and communication, and better social integration.

“Similarly, participants in learning for adults aged 50–71 living in England and Wales reported that learning had led to increases in their self-confidence, their enjoyment and satisfaction with life, how they felt about themselves and their ability to cope with everyday life (Dench and Regan 2000).”

1.4 Learning, Health and Well-being



People participating in adult education courses have a higher awareness of the importance of regular health-checks and adult education improves the way in which people communicate with health practitioners. Adults' learning can have a positive impact on the wellbeing of adults, healthier lifestyles and better mental health are observed:

One "large-scale study (Matrix Knowledge Group 2009), found that adults undertaking part-time education, either formal or informal, currently or at some point in the previous year, did have greater levels of wellbeing than those not participating in education."

Adult education can be a driver for change in life. For instance one study showed that qualifications obtained in later life increased a sense of wellbeing for the over-50s. Jenkins (2010) used the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing with more than 11,000 people aged 50 and above and tested the impact of taking part in adult education. Work status, partnership status and aspects of physical health and disability improved, as well as gaining a higher qualification. Prior qualifications also appeared to have a positive impact on quality of life for adults.

"The most striking finding was that music, arts and evening classes were significantly associated with positive changes in quality of life and life satisfaction and, though to a lesser extent, with wellbeing."

It can be concluded that learning is linked with well-being, life satisfaction and happiness.

1.5 Learning and participation

Learning at every age has the effect that people "devote themselves more actively to democratic life: They have more active voting behavior and are more political engaged, are more often involved in participatory structures and work harder for solidarity and social justice." People who are learning seem to be much more active in schools, in their neighbourhoods etc.

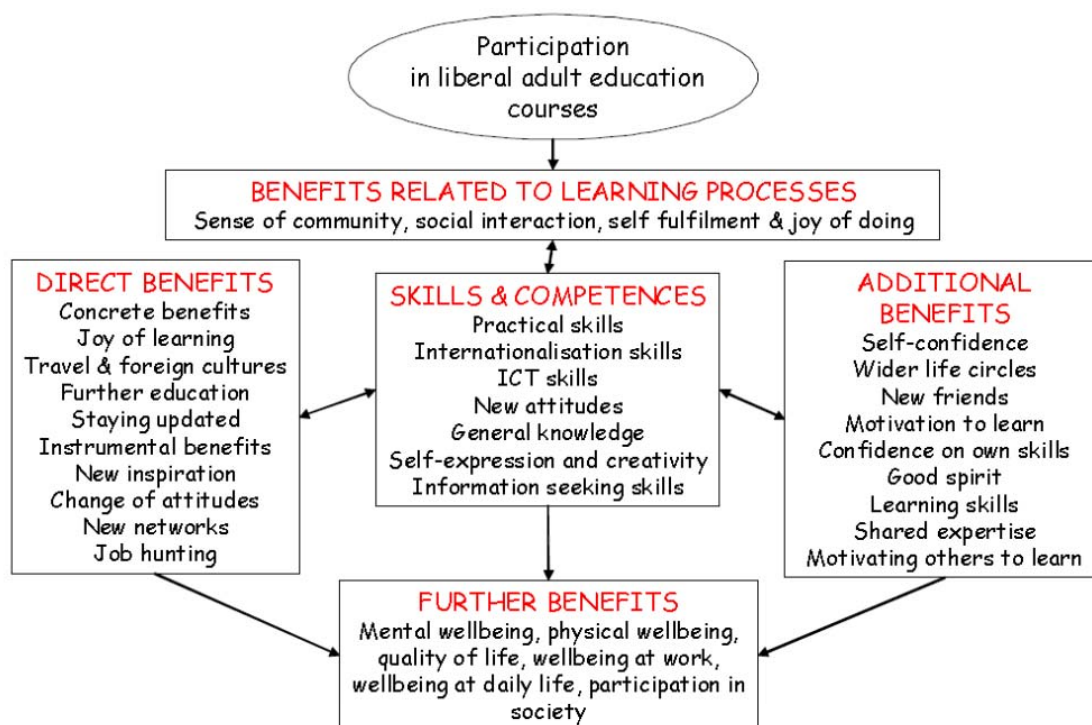
Qualitative studies showed that participation in specific adult learning courses was associated with gains in mental health, human and social development and community building and – especially in language courses – the development of shared communication skills in terms of social cohesion. Adult learning also has an influence on attitudes to others, developing a more open minded perspective.

In some countries, older people may be significant providers of childcare, as grandparents. "Older people are therefore a significant potential resource for nurturing the literacy and numeracy skills of young children, a role whose potential is reduced for those with poor skills."

1.6 The wider benefits of participation in liberal adult education

Jyri Manninen, professor for adult and continuing education at Joensuu University in Finland investigated the wider benefits of learning within liberal adult education.

The following model was used for the analysis of the wider benefits. About 1700 participants in Finnish liberal adult education were asked how they rank the effects of their learning.

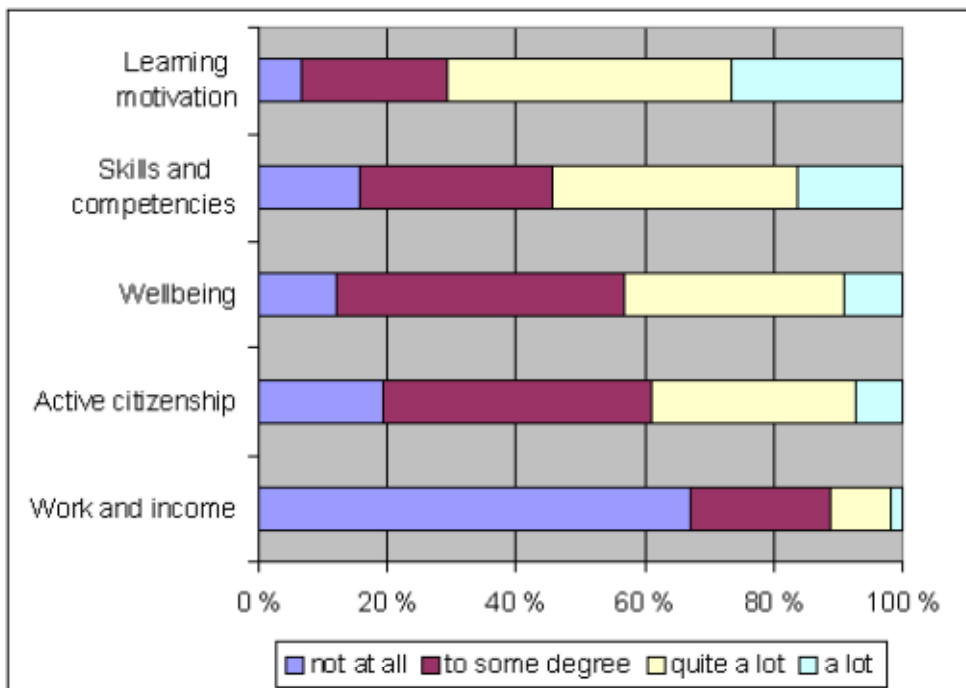


The benefits of learning can be summarized in five factors: Active citizenship, Wellbeing, Skills & competencies, Work & income, Learning motivation):

Table 3. Results of the factor analysis (n = 1744)

Active citizenship	Wellbeing	Skills & competencies	Work & income	Learning motivation
Sense of responsibility Societal involvement Social skills Social networks Critical thinking Self-confidence	Endurance Physical health Mental health Creativity Self-esteem	Knowledge Skills General knowledge	Earning opportunities Career development	Learning motivation

The respondents see effects for learning motivation, skills and competencies, wellbeing and active citizenship and very less for work and income.



Picture 2. How much participation has had impact on the following factors... (n = 1744)

These figures show the meaning of liberal adult education in Finland. Manningen sees liberal adult education can be seen as a policy tool to achieve, for instance, the Lisbon goals. He also discusses how liberal adult education can contribute to societal changes. The next table shows the results of this discussion.

Table 5. Wider benefits of learning and societal challenges

Challenges	What people get from liberal AE?
Globalization	Language skills, Cultural competencies
Active citizenship	Sense of community, Societal involvement
Social capital	Networks, Self-confidence
Lifelong learning	Learning motivation, Confidence on own skills, Joy of learning, Learning skills
Employability	Practical skills, ICT skills, General knowledge, Wellbeing at work
Health	Physical wellbeing
Mental health	Mental wellbeing, Wellbeing at work & daily life, Life quality

Sources

Rodie Akerman, John Vorhaus and John Brown, The Wider Benefits of Learning. Five part studies. Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning, Institute of Education, University of London
 Online: <http://www.elli.org/en/about-elli/documents/details/article/7e80213485/wider-benefits-of-learning-five-part-studies.html> (2011-09-18)

Centre for Research on the wider Benefits of Learning <http://www.learningbenefits.net/> (2011-09-18)

Jyri Manninen, Wider Benefits of Learning within Liberal Adult Education System in Finland. Paper presentation for Third Nordic conference on Adult Learning, 22-24 April 2009, Odense, Denmark.
 Online: <http://www.learningbenefits.net/> (2009-11-18)

2. Working with older people

2.1 Difficulties and Challenges

Factors that prevent older people from participating actively in their communities

- Loneliness and isolation
- Lack of communication and relationships with other members of the local community
- Lack of information about local opportunities.
- Lack of confidence. Fear of going out and meeting new people. Feeling vulnerable.
- Lack of motivation to find new and stimulating activities
- Cultural restrictions for different genders or ages

Issues that directly affect quality of life of older people:

- Health problems, disabilities, and mobility problems caused by age and condition
- Financial – a shortage of money to pay for extra activities, transport and entertainment
- Help for self care and
- Public transport, and accessibility of public venues
- Safety outside of the home

2.2 Ways of reaching inactive older people – reintegration into society

Meetings discussing older people's different issues

- Focused meetings, looking at the problems faced by older people, with professionals who can bring information and answers to specific questions / areas of interest, cultural interest issues, training on topics requested legal advice, etc.

Practical help

- Help for those who have immediate practical needs, for example, care to people in need, financial and housing advice, arranging cleaning for them, collecting clothes, food, transport to go shopping, home support, help with sending e-mails and phone calls to keep in touch with their family, giving individual advice (peer tutoring)

Exchange of good practice

- Exchange of views and information, communication of ideas between one village and another, one family and another, one neighbourhood and another. Ideas for solving problems and different types of mutual support

Social activities and events

- Gather information and create a database of resources which support community activities.
- Community events for different occasions - special days, seasonal celebrations, events to raise awareness and stimulate young people. Family and intergenerational events.
- Events which are fun and light-hearted, not too serious
- Practical activities which promote socialisation, e.g. gardening and environmental projects, well-being and Keep Fit, cooking and eating together, dancing and music.

Valuing knowledge, skills and life experiences

- Intergenerational activities where older people can share their knowledge and skills with younger people and children. Passing on unwritten history, crafts, traditions, skills, dancing, music. Activities planned at a time of day to suit all ages.
- Exhibitions and displays of local history and memories.
- Contributions and suggestions from older people about what activities they need
- Younger professional people value the life experiences of older people. Allow time to listen.
- Show respect and don't patronise.
- Remind older people that they are important members of the community, able to both take from and contribute to society. Encourage them to be on committees and influence decision-makers. Be involved in the democracy development (consultations, public meetings)

Visits

- Home visits made between members of the community / at home for people to determine specific needs and to evaluate different situations / visits to places of interest and recreation, visits from a village to another / visits to other places in the country / visits in places outside the country, etc.

Trips

- Seasonal trips to different places in the neighbourhood, in the country and outside the country

Co-operation with voluntary organisations and statutory providers

- Shared planning between health, education and social care providers
- Use of volunteers to support older people in activities
- Support for community in providing local meeting places and resources
- Promoting courses and other facilities. Sharing knowledge about target groups. Campaigning for the benefit of older people.

2.3 Examples of Good Practice

A. Popular University Muscelul - Local group of initiative Muscelul, RO

From 14 to 17 October 2010, in the project „Citizen Comes First”, there was held a workshop around Campulung Muscel to promote educational and civic projects which aimed to involve residents in community affairs. Because the city Campulung Muscel is placed in the mountain area, with 35000 with a population of 35.000 inhabitants, and most of all are retired persons (about 56%), this project was a priority for our community.

Members of the project „Elders”, discussed various ways that retired people could be involved in civic, cultural and educational activities. The seminar was advertised by posters, press releases and by establishing a mobile box where people write down their problems. Experts could then assess the situation to find the real issues facing the community and evaluate the situation.

The first meeting was attended by 20 to 30 older people. First of all, there were discussions about health, legal issues, ecology, cultural, and administrative issues. Currently we have registered 56 seniors, which are participating periodically at actions like:

- Grandparents teaching grandchildren traditions and local heritage through competitions such as the "Festival crackers with egg".
- "Affection does not kill" which tries to help the older people with disabilities to learn or give them support with services such as utility bills, phone, shopping and support with medication.
- With support from older people retired from army, we carry on "Greening the tourist area The shepherd - Save Nature".
- Partnership between the senior club and various educational institutions by making shows, civic action and engagement at City Days Celebration.
- In future we propose to collaborate with various NGOs, who are dealing with activities to protect the older people.
- We prepare a seminar in September in partnership with the Arges County retired people.

Given the lifelong learning of seniors, we are preparing an event on October 1, 2011, the International Day older people, with the support from local councillors.

In our actions, we encountered difficulties with regard to attitude, relationships of communication, but with the support of Campulung Hall, we obtained an office, administrative support in our activities and also guidance and collaboration as we try to meet the needs of older people.

B. Older people around Drajna, Romania

“The one who doesn’t have an old man, he must buy one!” , says an old Romanian proverb. With our opened mind and our spirit of self helping, we, the people from Drajna, always try to put in practice the meaning of this proverb.

A big step forward in our activities that we were develop over time with older people at Drajna, was in 2004, when **German Popular Universities Association – IIZ-DVV- Project Romania**, chose to include our district as one of five pilot communities which were partners in the project “Improving the lives of seniors in Romania”.

In this project, we had the chance to meet new people, to exchange ideas and good practices, to participate at workshops that were made in those five communities. At the first meeting organised in Bucharest, we had the opportunity to meet experts from Italy and Holland, countries which had a lot of experience in this field of activities.

The first demo workshop was developed in our district, and the guests had the opportunity to know us in our habitat, around our houses. We organized demo activities, we visited institutions and social projects, and because we had some experience, we gave presentation of the good practices used in Drajna, working with seniors. Those who saw what it’s happening in Drajna decided that the motto of the project to be “We received, to give!”.

Our work with older people has themes around social, educational, for entertainment and free time, volunteer activities, etc.

In social field we identify the people who have problems, and get them in touch with other older people. With this intervention, we improved the living conditions for these people. We carried out fund

raising activities for the flood victims from Vrancea, collecting food and clothes. Another project encouraged the senior citizens to organise special events in their district such as a village day and improve church attendance, etc.

In educational field, we organised meetings with doctors, and other experts in other fields, according to their wishes. We arranged a lot of trips to explore the Romanian sites of interest. At every cultural activity in Drajna, the older people were the special guests of the local mayor, and they are very proud of that. We collected very old items such as household objects, carpets, towels, a popular shirt called „ie”, to open a village museum.

We are using the experience of life of the senior citizens in to take part voluntary activities such as the planting of fruit trees in partnership Local group of initiative in project “Citizens comes first”. This is an on-going project, now involving local young people, to continue planting trees and ensuring their maintenance.

We also developing others activities with older people and for them, but if you want to know us much better, we are inviting you to Drajna!

C. “Miss Wisdom’ Project - Sulina, Romania

Miss Wisdom is a project implemented in the town of Sulina within the framework of a series of activities developed for the seniors.

Steps we followed-

1. Identifying the senior’s need to socialize

- through direct meetings with the seniors
- conclusions we have reached during other activities with the seniors.

2. Forming an effective work team

- The Local Initiative Group
- The Volunteer’s Club
- The Library of Sulina
- Sulina’s House of Culture
- Representatives of the City Hall of Sulina
- Representatives of the sponsors

3. Contacting the senior's families

- persuading the families to get involved (children, grandchildren and other relatives)
- preparing the families for the cultural activities (identifying the poems, the songs, the stories that the seniors use to tell in their families, identifying their practical skills, recalling their best memories)
- rehearsing the cultural moments in secret with the families

4. Contacting the seniors

- choosing the participant seniors considering: their availability, mobility, practical skills and artistic skills
- establishing the artistic performance of each participant
- rehearsing in secret individually (without the families to know)

5. Choosing the location considering some specific criteria:

- the place had to be accessible for the participants and the aged public
- It had to be big enough for everybody

6. Promoting the event:

- making posters

7. Choosing the members of the jury:

- Representatives of the City Hall, of the sponsors, competent persons in artistic domains able to decide over the participant's talent or skills.

8. The activities:

- "Miss Wisdom" Competition
- Chosen participants (8 seniors, aged 65-75 and 42 of their relatives)
- The stages of the competition (the contestants didn't know about their family's participation)
- Dancing with one family member
- Singing a traditional song, symbolic for the town of Sulina, the Danube Delta or the Black Sea
- Knitting by hand (the most beautiful knitted model and the biggest fabric knitted in a given time)
- Telling stories (the most beautiful story of a personal happy experience)

- The funniest participant
- The most beautiful artistic moments set up by the families and based upon common memories
- The best and the noisiest gallery made of friends, relatives and other supporters

9. Winner was Maria Popa (75 years old).

10. Impact and visibility

- the idea has been accepted by the community even though it seemed an utopia at the very beginning
- the contestants and their families have been helped to cross some limits and to be less formal

D. Volunteer Peer Tutoring Programme - Helsinki, Finland

Volunteer senior students, computer buddies (i.e. peer tutors), help beginners in using computers and training in basic skills. They also recruit inactive learners to computer classes of the Helsinki Adult Education Centre. Seniors who have not earlier taken part in computer courses at adult education centre can get a free course for beginners with support from The Finnish National Board of Education.

About 20 volunteers are tutoring in six different places around Helsinki usually once a week. Three of these places are located in public libraries, three are in different district centres of our education centre.

Methods used within the program

- Collaboration with libraries. The library staff or staff members of our centre take care of computer newbies and make a reservation for them for tutoring. Then they inform the tutors mainly by e-mail. Usually all tutors have fixed tutoring hours.
- Personal tutoring. Beginners can get personal help and guidance 1.5 -2 hours free of charge. They can also get several tutoring sessions. Some of them bring a laptop of their own with them.
- Encouraging computer newbies. Tutors encourage beginners to take part in computer courses at our centre.

ADVERTISING

We inform about personal tutoring in the printed course catalogue of our education centre. There are also advertisements on a notice board in different places that seniors visit. Volunteers have also attended our Open Doors happenings and activated senior citizens.

FINANCING

Tutoring is free of charge. Tutors can get training and they can attend computer courses of our centre free of charge. The number of courses depends on how many tutoring hours computer buddies have completed.

To keep tutors motivated we have organized various projects for them. The Finnish National Board of Education has given us financial support for a project 'Social media and senior citizens'. We have studied new innovations of information society and we have formed networks with other volunteers in Helsinki and in different parts of Finland. Volunteer computer buddies are also participants in the 'UNIC project'.

3. Older people - a heterogeneous target group in the adult educational market

3.1 Who are older people?

It is not easy to cite a common definition that adult educators can use. Increasing life expectancy and economic / labour market challenges made adult educators rethink the old-fashioned paths and practice. The changes force the organisations to develop new programs and apply a complex view on the target group.

3.2 Active retired people

As the life expectancy is increasing adult educators talk about 3rd and 4th age. People who retired twenty years ago in their mid 50s are still active. The UNIC project itself proved that people in their 80s are still active and ready to travel abroad and take part in European projects.

Adult educational organisations have a rather clear picture on this group's learning habits and needs. Several articles and researches were published in the last ten years which emphasised the strong relation between life-long learning and mental health.

Active retired people prefer informal and non-formal learning opportunities. The vast majority of this group look for leisure time activities. Self-expression and health condition is in the focus but as they have to face challenges in our rapidly changing world they are also keen on learning about new technology (IT, internet, mobile phone etc.). Voluntary work is also popular among this age group but the percentage of active volunteers can be very different country by country.

3.3 Older people in the labour market

Ten years ago we could define older people easily (55+) according to the retirement age but nowadays it is not so obvious. The retirement age has dramatically increased and has already reached 65 or even more in European countries.

At the moment adult educational organisations have no clear picture about the long-term effect of this change on the educational market. We do not know exactly the “new generation's” learning needs and expectations. Will the trend change or not? It is common across Europe that multinational companies have their own education policy; they run further training within their HR system. But will they develop a new policy of employee retention? What about the SMB (small and medium business)?

What can be seen at the moment – mainly in those European countries which are badly affected by the economic crises – that people at the age of 55 became more at risk in the labour market and it happens more often that they lose their job before they achieve the retirement age. Will we call these people in their 60s “older people” even if they are still in the labour market or will we have a new definition on old age?

We have open and unanswered questions at the moment but adult educational organisations have to reflect to the needs of these people and offer further training or vocational education if necessary.

According to the above described processes we can state that our target group is heterogeneous with different learning needs. On the one hand there are active older people in the educational market who would like to spend their time usefully, but not seeking employed work. They are engaged in learning

or they do voluntary work and they maintain active citizenship in their 3rd or 4th age. On the other hand some older people need to stay in the labour market and need to change or restart their professional life. They probably will look for suitable vocational education.

The UNIC project could reflect to this rather challenging situation, and within the framework of the project we demonstrated transferable good practices in the partners' countries.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

- The Italian partner (Cesfor) introduced a vocational course which was offered for women over 50. This program also included an intergenerational aspect.
- The German partner (VHS Bonn) introduced how they addressed older people's daily needs and gave an adequate answer to that. ("Remain mobile at the old age", "Types of Housing – Life at the old age")
- We saw good examples in the UK (Stoke Lodge – Bristol), in Finland (VHS Helsinki), in Austria and in Romania (Euroed) for leisure time activities.
- In Hungary project partners experienced some element of the SLIC workshop which aims to engage older people in learning and volunteering.
- In each country we saw examples of volunteering as host countries involved local older volunteers in the project meetings. Two running programs were introduced in Austria (senior archaeology) and Finland (computer buddies) and we could study the offer of numerous NGOs in the UK when we participated in the Age Festival.

You can read more good examples on the webpage of the UNIC project: <http://unic.learning-partnership.eu/>

3.4 Who are inactive older people?

In the course of the project we also discussed the issue of inactive older people as one of the aims of the UNIC project was to involve inactive older people in all dimensions of learning and to engage them in lifelong learning. Partner organisation tried to define who we mean by inactive older people.

According to the definitions we can differentiate three approaches.

Some of the definitions apply a broader approach and put the phenomenon in a community context. These definitions underline the lack of participation in our societies.

For example:

- *“Inactive older people are those people who are not engaged in learning, volunteering or any other community activities.”*
- *“Older people who are not interested in receiving information or participation in events in adult educational institutions and do not take part in community life.”*

Some definitions refer to the learning barriers and emphasise that adult educational institutions can reduce some of the barriers if they are aware of them. For example:

- *“These are people who do not participate because of a lack of personal resources. Resources in this meaning are all circumstances and relations that enable people to participate in learning activities. Important resources are, for example, health, time, income, former positive experiences with formal education, social integration, access to meaningful and adequate learning opportunities, knowledge and information about them, both low emotional and low physical distances to learning opportunities, sense of self-efficacy, sense of well-being etc. While some of these resources cannot be influenced by us, others are open to influence for us. This means for ex. creating meaningful and adequate learning opportunities and improving the knowledge and information about them.”*

The partner organisations also applied an institutional approach when they defined inactive older people. For example:

- *“In relation to our institution they are not our regular visitors.”*
- *“Learners who do not attend any courses in official adult education centres. Nevertheless they perhaps found an informal way of learning. (e-learning, informal groups, informal meetings).”*
- *“The institutional definition means non-participants. Non-Participants are those who did not attend a course, a workshop, a single lecture or any other pedagogical activity during a period of at least two years. Activity in the meaning of participation in non-formal educational settings has to be seen in a context of previous learning experiences, of learning activities during the younger life and during the occupational life. Informal learning seems to be of great importance especially for older people. We have little knowledge about informal learning.”*
- *“Inactive older people are those who have not attended at that time any kind of training activity.”*
- *“People who prefer other forms of adult education as those we offer – e.g. single and not group-based learning, informal groups etc.”*

3.5 Learning barriers

The UNIC project team also studied the learning barriers in each country. In Hungary the Budapest Cultural Centre ran a workshop session within which the results of a former Grundtvig project (Removing barriers to learning for older people) were introduced. The Grundtvig project summarised the learning barriers and pointed out that despite of the diversity of the age group these barriers are rather similar in each country.

The barriers are the following:

Dispositional barriers (e.g. attitudinal or psychological)

- Motivation, negative experiences
- Lack of confidence
- Fear of exams (failure)
- Predisposition to learning (personality, degree of open-mindedness)
- Physical and mental health
- Response to peer group norms
- Resistance to change
- Age, ethnicity, gender and physical ability

Institutional barriers (within the system itself)

- The Philosophy of the institution e.g.; nursing homes may recognise comfort, not learning.
- Information: institutional failure to communicate information on learning opportunities e.g.; ways of recruitment, types of advice and guidance, language used for learning, not teaching how to learn to learn, native language competency.
- Logistics: cost of course fees, timing, transport, accessible to people with disabilities

Situational barriers (practical considerations)

- Location, disabilities, time, income
- Limited finances
- Older people do not have economic “pulling power”
- Family roles and expectations
- Mentality and attitudes of teachers toward older people
- Lack of evaluation and feedback as learners

- Accommodation of different learning styles
- Location and access (geographically remote)

Contextual barriers (social and political)

- Social class
- The historical experience of older people's education
- Racism
- Sexism
- Societal attitudes to disability and age

3.6 Inclusion of all older people into life-long learning

The inclusion of all members of the age group in adult education was highlighted throughout the project. Even if we all have had difficulties in reaching inactive older people we could demonstrate some good examples of inclusion and reduction of learning barriers during the project meetings. Among others the VHS Helsinki demonstrated the inclusion of older people from rural areas in language learning and the Budapest Cultural Centre introduced the "Click on, Granny!" project which was an official program of the European "E-inclusion – be part of it!" campaign in 2008.

You can read more good practice examples on the webpage of the UNIC project: <http://unic.learning-partnership.eu/>).

As a conclusion of the good practice-examples in terms of the involvement of inactive older people we can recommend in general to take the following measures in order to involve inactive older people more successfully:

- take the learning barriers into consideration
- use more personal communication tools and channels such as network of the learning community or interview
- as our resources (human, financial and time) is limited cooperation and networking with the social sector would be essential

- community development considered a good tool to involve inactive older people

This short essay tried to point out that older people as a target group is not homogeneous at all. Thanks to such European projects we are able to study their learning needs and expectations therefore we can be more prepared to face new challenges in the future.

4. The challenge of demographic change

4.1 Demographic change and the diversity of living conditions

The project partners are affected by demographic change, albeit to varying degrees. Causes of demographic change are the continuous rise in life expectancy and declining birth rates. The direct consequence is a growing proportion of older people in the population, with a significantly higher proportion of females in particular among the higher-age group. Demographic change does not just include the fact that we are living longer and our society as a whole is getting older. Society is also becoming more colourful and diverse. This heterogeneity is also reflected in the older population. Accordingly their interests and educational needs also differ.

4.1.2 A wide range of ages and...

Heterogeneity is first seen in the breadth of the age range for age 50 upwards. This includes - according to the World Health Organisation categories - *aging* people (51-60 years), *older* people (61-75 years), *old* people (76-90 years) and *very old* people (from 91 years). Here, the natural aging process is not tied to a particular chronological age, but depends on the individual.

Age	World Health Organisation (WHO) classifications
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51-60 years	aging people
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61-75 years	older people
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76-90 years	old people
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From 91 years	very old people
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4.1.3 different lives

Heterogeneity does not only exist in terms of age, but also in living circumstances. This is evident if we concentrate primarily on the target groups of ageing and older people (50 to 75-year-olds), an age, which is known in specialist literature as the "third age" or "third phase of life". It includes people who a) are working full-time and want to develop themselves professionally, b) want to get ready for retirement, c) are in the transition between work and retirement, as well as people, d) who finished professional life a long time ago. Based on their family situation it can include a) parents of adolescent children and b) people who have already brought up their children, c) people who care for relatives, d) people who live alone or e) with a partner etc.

4.1.4 Age should be considered in conjunction with other features

In the development of learning opportunities for older learners, the fact must be taken into account that age is an important both formative, as well as limiting socio-demographic characteristic. It is not enough simply to describe the individual living and personal circumstances of a person. They must always be considered in conjunction with other socio-structural characteristics. These include health and mobility, (pre-) education, employment, income, gender, family circumstances, social integration and contacts, cultural background, place of residence and many more.

4.1.5 Lifelong learning as a prerequisite for inclusion in old age

The length of old age is getting longer. Simultaneously, technological and social change is accelerating at an ever faster rate. Just to remain socially up-to-date to some extent, older people need to pursue lifelong learning, independent of any employment. In fact participation in educational activities decreases in all countries with increasing age. So it is also socially selective. There is no compensation, instead there is a threat of an additional widening of the existing knowledge and information gaps as a result of the demographic change.

4.1.6 Educational activities promote quality of life in old age

The effects of participation in education are not only limited to the facilitation of social participation and social inclusion. Numerous studies show that participation in educational activities improves health, personal well-being, development and stability of social contacts and preserve general cognitive abilities in old age.

4.1.7 "Involuntarily inactive older people" as a challenge for educational work

Participation in adult education is voluntary. If older people do not take advantage of the opportunities at educational institutions, this may be because of a conscious decision not to carry on training or because they prefer to learn in other ways such as informal or non-group-based individual learning. This group can be described as voluntarily inactive. This should be distinguished from the target group comprising those who are *involuntarily inactive* from adult education. This concerns people who do not participate because certain resources are not available to them. Resources in this sense are all circumstances and conditions that would enable participation in education. Important resources such as health, time, income, previous positive experiences with education, social inclusion, access to appropriate learning opportunities, knowledge and awareness about them, as well as both physically and emotionally low distances, feelings of self-efficacy, etc. While some of these resources cannot be easily influenced for the project partners, the form of the opportunities and the knowledge and awareness of them changes.

4.1.8 Requirement for targeted approaches

To correspond to the different educational needs and interests described, a general "education provision for the older people" is not enough. Successful educational work for the older generation would require a target group and circumstance analysis, in order to respond to, and attract people. This applies in equal measure to the contents and communication of opportunities and their practical details. An important tool would be to conduct interviews with participants and non-participants and/or group discussions, as they were implemented during the project in different ways. The target group analysis provides information on potential cooperation partners and structures. Cooperation partners can also be valuable in the identification of target groups and their requirements.

4.2. Neither regardless of age nor age-specific, but both

From the perspective of older people, there are both reasons for learning in mixed age groups as well as for only learning with their peers. Their preferences are usually basic, but varied or on themes.

4.2.1 Age independent education

Participants' ages play no role in age-independent opportunities. They are generally open to adults of all ages. When older and younger people learn together and both bring their different experiences and

knowledge, it can be enriching for both and learning success may be particularly high. The mix of ages can help facilitate meetings and exchanges between different generations, increase knowledge about each other and develop social capital.

Age-Independent opportunities should remain the rule for adult education. Preconditions for its success are a similar level of output with respect to the contents and common interests of the participants concerning the design and progress of the activity. Public relations aimed at the target group, venues and times can help to open them up for participation groups which had not been reached before.

4.2.2 Intergenerational education opportunities (Generations, connecting education opportunities)

Whereas for age-independent opportunities age composition is unimportant, as shown in applications, connecting opportunities are deliberately aimed at certain generations to bring members of different generations together. Two variations will be distinguished by the project partners: 1) opportunities where a meeting between generations occurs within the activity itself, and 2) opportunities which prepare for such meetings and provide support, for example to promote involvement in civil society and to develop new contacts.

Examples of opportunities classed under the first variation are, "Family stories in words and pictures - generations learn together" (Vienna), IT contact for old and young (Helsinki). Examples of the second variation are animal visiting services in nursing homes, readings at kindergartens to promote involvement in civil society or the "Wohnwunschwerkstatt" (workshop on desired accommodation) for both young and old (the whole of Bonn).

The consistently positive response to these opportunities confirms that there is considerable potential for development of intergenerational opportunities, which have definitely not yet been exhausted. In addition to learning, all involved gain interesting new social experiences. An important factor for success is that it is not just the older people who are interested in the meetings, but the younger people too.

Experience shows that intergenerational projects require special educational and organisational preparation. The fact remains that type 2 projects mainly consist of socially active participants, so not the actual target group of the U.N.I.C. project.

4.2.3 Age-specific educational opportunities

In addition to age-independent and generation connecting educational opportunities, age-specific opportunities are still useful and indispensable for the following:

- Age-specific issues and questions

(e.g. living circumstances in old age, health, assisted living, transport, etc.)

- Assistance for active aging people

(e.g. skills and memory training, mobility, preparing for retirement),

- Age-appropriate learning speeds

(e.g. non-professional and certificate-oriented courses, computer courses for designed for older learners, etc.)

- Different availability times

(e.g. preference for non-working older people to do activities in the day rather than the evening)

Homogeneous age groups may facilitate participation for people who have not previously participated in organised training activities, as the presence of peers provides them with more security, and they do not feel pressurised by the presence of younger people.

When organising age-specific opportunities for older people, it is important not to be ageist, but to provide opportunities which would be just as well-received as age-specific opportunities for younger people or other target group opportunities.

Activities for active older people make it clear that age is not only characterised by a degradation in skills and abilities, but that it is also associated with a gain in skills and abilities. They should be further developed in a targeted manner.

4.3. Further results

Older people are not a special group (also see points 1.4 and 1.7). The following findings apply to other age groups to a large extent. They especially apply to older, non-working participants, because they often lack access to professionally-led training.

4.3.1 Educational opportunities must have clear benefits for the participants...

The decline in educational activities in late and post-employment suggests that the decision to participate in educational activities is largely benefit-oriented. When designing and advertising educational activities for older people who have not yet been reached, the personal benefit and value of professional training must be made clear. Keeping fit and active and gaining new knowledge and skills are the main motivations for participants.

4.3.2 and help them "to feel good".

The experiences of the U.N.I.C. project partners also confirm that a comfortable learning atmosphere and feeling good while doing the activity plays a central role. This includes contact and exchange with other people. Benefit and emotional well-being are interdependent. Both heart and mind need to be satisfied. Both are equally important for learning success.

4.3.3 There must be some connection between teachers and students.

The teacher and the way they teach the subject are a key factor for the learning environment and well-being of participants. Especially when training inexperienced participants, it is important that they do not just impart knowledge, but that they are also sensitive to needs and feedback and consider them in future courses.

4.3.4 Familiar learning environment

An intimate learning environment also contributes to feeling good. Familiarity is not just about space. Intimacy is created through the participation of other familiar people from their own personal environment. Opportunities for hard-to-reach target groups should therefore take place in familiar locations (e.g. meeting places) and if possible, call on already existing groups to encourage participation. Cooperation partners can provide very important support.

4.3.5 Access to topics related to everyday life

Education opportunities which focus on the world people live in and everyday life issues (e.g. problems of old age, health, transport, etc.), can facilitate access for previously involuntarily inactive people. These are suited to individual activities with no longer-term commitment to participate for example.

4.3.6 Rethink participation fees

The income gap is increasing in size. A large number of older citizens are poor. Even seemingly low fees are a large barrier for these people, preventing them from participating.

4.3.7 Personal approach

It is not enough to approach these people through the traditional information channels such as programme brochures, posters, flyers, etc. They need to be recruited through outreach work and personal contact, through cooperation partners and communication through social networks. Press articles and larger events are also helpful for raising awareness about learning opportunities.

5. Framework conditions of the partners - commons and differences

The Partnership clearly understands that the increase of life expectancy will re-design the structure and the profile of our society with a deep impact on our system by an economical, social and cultural point of view.

European society displays an increasing “corpus” of older citizens becoming more heterogeneous. It's difficult to group this “corpus” using traditional stereotypes. Understanding this new profile, the different needs of social involvement and active aging was the framework in which the UNIC project developed itself and realized the foreseen activities.

The active involvement of citizens after their working age was the challenge that the project and the Partnership decided to face and accept, in each country.

Usually older people are seen outside the society, far away from social relationships and responsibilities. This old stereotype stops them from fully experience their citizenship rights and their new social position. The main principle of “Active Experience Expansion” for the improvement of life quality of older citizens was effective in the fight against the above mentioned stereotype.

Facing the increase of life expectancy, local and national policies supporting older citizens are becoming more complex but in many EU Countries those policies are still not effective by a social progress point of view. The public policies and actions to support the transition from working life to quiescence fostering the “ageing” as an active resource, are not fully developed yet.

The system of the institutions in charge of the management of this shift (public bodies, private operators, associations, foundations, Third Age Universities, older citizens centres, etc.) needs to be strengthened (by an economical, social and productive point of view), promoted at a local level. All this predicts the deep growing demographic impact in the future.

For these reasons the EU policies and the policy-makers of each country should keep in mind that those citizens are not only aiming at their well-being and their health, but also at their personal learning and, in general, at the enrichment of their life experience.

The UNIC project partnership, as a common point, stress that the motivations of this target are related with learning also in contexts not specifically designed and prepared to support older citizens: that means that, in many EU areas, the demand about learning as an existential personal need to improve life condition is growing independently and sometimes outside policies frameworks.

Another common point it's about the need of a deeper integration at a public policies level, in order to merge training paths and personal experience: intergenerational experiences and approach, innovative and effective formal/informal paths, transnational mobility experiences and knowledge of new cultural and social contexts. The policy-makers response to this stimulus should be wider, more inclusive in order to answer the expectations of life improvement.

The UNIC partnership agrees that the EU policies and resources and the local institutions ones are not adequate to fulfil the demand of this target after the retirement. Within the framework of the actions displayed by the project there was a comparison of the local Welfare public policies stressing the differences between older citizens in each Country in terms of available resources and costs: policies

for older citizens in Finland and, at a lower level, in UK, Austria, Hungary and Germany provide economical investment and support and the contribution by those citizens are low enough. The partners working in those countries can count on high level public structures ready and able to engage and include citizens in social and cultural learning activities after their retirement. They can display a wide range of training activities at a local level.

In Italy and Romania, the organisations in charge of adult learning (mostly private) are supported in a different way: the training paths are public funded and activated only through projects (the training activity starts only if the project is approved) and no stable public funding is provided. Outside this flow the older citizens must pay in full to attend training activities.

In general the UNIC partnership states that the EU funding for the “active ageing” policies and actions should be raised, also considering the resources available for other sectors like “employability”.

About barriers to older citizen inclusion in learning/training activities there are also some differences. Basically it is related with the social, health, economic, family, cultural differences experienced in each Country and in each area of those countries. The first clear barrier is about money: the increasing crisis of the Welfare in all the EU Countries (at various levels) could bring the request of a higher economical participation in order to attend training/learning activities and a lot of older citizens could not be able to give this contribution.

A socio-demographical barrier is related to the trend highlighted by the UNIC partnership that describes men as less involved in training/learning activities after retirement. During the monitoring activities the typical profile of a person involved in training activities after retirement was: “a woman, in her middle sixty, with an average education level”. That means that:

- The reasons why men are less involved in training/learning activities should be studied more
- Additional efforts should be done in order to foster men inclusion in training/learning activities.

Another social barrier is connected with the fact that often older people are devoted to the management of the “youngsters” of the family. This reduces the time available for learning activities and additional obstacles as disabilities or local transports could reduce to zero those chances. It means that the logistics should be considered as a potential barrier and the placement of the learning

structure a potential positive factor. Knowing and using new technologies for distance learning/training must be considered as a key factor in order to reduce the above-mentioned risks.

Considering these obstacles and barriers, it is very important that the local policies support the widening of the training/learning offer and the dissemination of the learning structures at a local level in order to make it easy to reach them. The goal is the integration between learning paths and citizenship rights with an integrated services view and within a new welfare framework.

About the learning/training environment, the UNIC partnership highlight that a “positive attitude” is a key needful factor in order to include older learners with health or psychological needs. Learning and inclusion barriers are strictly connected with personal motivations and the benefits coming from the participation to learning activities. Those activities need to be designed to support personal needs. The information about the existing training activities at a local level should be promoted as a “social issue”, a chance of enrich the personal life experience, not only as a chance of gaining specific competences. In order to do this a strong effort in terms of public policies and funding should be made and the social debate about older people needs and expectations should be the basis of this process and should never stop.

An intergenerational approach and the design of a set of integrated activities could be key factors in order to avoid social exclusion. In this set international mobility, sharing experiences and commitment with other social and cultural groups could play a very important role.

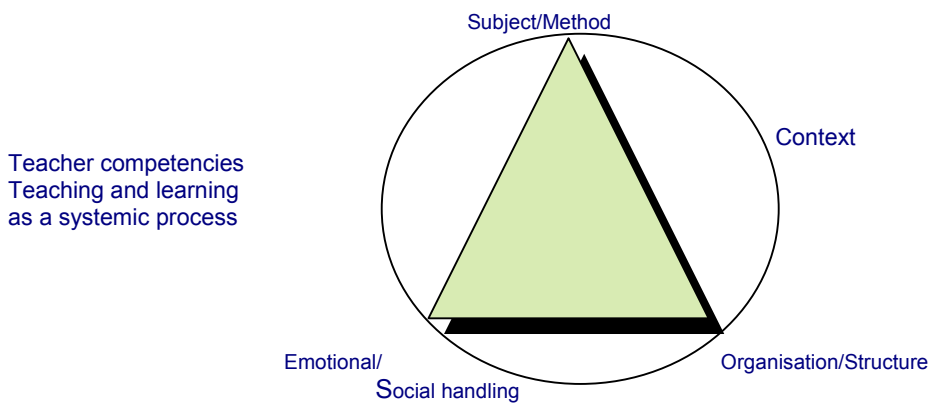
As a final observation, the UNIC Partnership agrees on the existence of a “new third age”: its characteristics are not well clear yet and further insights are still needed. The next years will reveal new aspects and contents. By this point of view the UNIC Project seems to be the first stage of a longer path that all the UNIC partners will continue to go through.

The new trends make us think about a growing social group with so many differences inside related with personal experiences in terms of family, culture, society, work. There are common elements: those people are more and more available, curious, focused and willing about the chance of experiment and learn new “things”, all in order to better their life and not age alone. This brings us the need of discovering what this “new third age” is becoming: ageing trying to get our life back in full, building social relationships, finding new meanings without acting “as we were young”.

6. Specific competences for trainers and staff

Results of a teacher meeting within the framework of the Grundtvig 2 partnership U.N.I.C on 9th of December, 2010

“Lifelong learning for older people”



Subject / Method:

- older people shall be treated with respect
- less theory / more practical exercises
- to be conscious to use of voice -> speak louder and slowly
- quiet, slow approach, step by step
- many repetitions
- well designed documents
- a lot of visualization
- clear instructions
- many practical exercises (older people love to write)
- clear structures, every lesson the same structure,
- many breaks -> on request
- small exercises, especially for concentration
- good lightening in class-rooms
- look for fixed (teachers try to mix up)

Emotional / Social handling:

- attention to the needs of older people?
- sensibility of achievements
- need of communication
- respect for individual life and learning biographies
- experience and knowledge of older learners as a course component
- education as an interactive field of survival training
- listen to personal experiences
- listen, but limits
- task accomplishment makes proud
- male participants wants to be admired
- older people want to be praised!
- clarify and resolve disturbs immediately
- 15 minutes, when course ends, be there to listen

Organisation / structure:

- Clear course descriptions in the program and website
- give an overview / structure of the course / the aims of the course
- many exercises / games for better concentration
- creative breaks
- purposeful work
- keep noise levels low

Room relations:

- Room Size
- lighting conditions (dim light)
- fixed seating
- comfortable chairs, seat cushions!
- "clean toilets"

How to motivate older people to attend in courses:

- course texts -> clearly and meaningful
- events
- offer workshops
- contact to retirement homes -> creative courses, senior classes with children, for example .. "dance in seats")
- pick up skills of older learners as a course topic (e.g. old recipes, calligraphy, old handcrafts, ancient texts)
- offer intergenerational courses (e.g. family history as a computer course)
- Good infrastructure:
 - parking situation (disabled persons)
 - bus for seniors
 - driving services (cooperation) community support
 - Car sharing
- senior courses booked by adult children
- exhibition of courses as motivation
- Trial workshops / join in activities
- creative workshops
- reductions

7. Motivating learning environment through non-formal adult education

This chapter reflects the experiences with learning in the non-formal sector which have been made in the U.N.I.C. learning partnership. An empirical basis can be found in the Danish study „Breaking social patterns through the learning environments of the non-formal adult education“¹ which is the basic source.

7.1 What is Non-Formal Adult Education?

The working methodology in non-formal education is based on the understanding of the individual who is in possession of experience and competencies. Non-formal learning is

¹ Steen Elsborg and Stehen Hoyrup Pedersen: *Breaking social patterns through the learning environments of the non-formal adult education*. Kopenhagen: Danish Adult Education Association 2009

„embedded in planned activities that are not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support), but which contain an important learning element. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner’s perspective. It typically does not lead to certification.“ (Cedefop 2003²)

The learning environment in non-formal adult education is motivating because it enables that a learner is present emotionally, socially and cognitively. Learning means the integration of something which is already known in culture and society but means also developing new knowledge, new skills and competencies. Learning is acquisition and transformative. Learning happens in a formal and in a non-formal setting. More and more we can see that learning is not only a result of formal education in institutions, learning happens everywhere, in non-formal contexts for instance in adult education and cultural centres and also informal in daily life activities. The understanding of learning and the culture of learning in the non-formal sector creates an interaction between these different forms of learning.

Motivation for education is understood as changeable. Non-formal adult education is based on the interaction between the individual and the educational system of which adult education is a part of. Adult education starts at the possibilities of the individual and focuses on self-actualisation. Learning is seen as an integral part of being human. Challenge is the essential incentive for learning and meaningfulness is a *conditio sine qua non* for adults learning.

In the non-formal sector education is connected with motivation which is not seen as an *„inherent trait, but as an interaction /relation created in the context“*.

The methodological approach in the non-formal sector is based on the understand of learning as a process which is connected with emotion:

„The learning process comprises individual emotional processes, in which the participant feels seen and understood. Recognition and resource thinking are crucial principles.“

The learning process also comprises social processes:

„The individual participant has his/her own view of the social reality he/she is living in. Through the social processes, social acceptance and the sense of community are experienced and an understanding of sharing problems and challenges with others are created.“

² Glossary on transparency and validation of non formal and informal learning (2nd working paper, April 2003).
Online: <http://www.eaea.org/doc/Glossary.pdf>

The learning process is also characterized by the individual cognitive processes.

„The prior context/situation/specific knowledge of the participants is de-contextualized. Knowledge and experiences are de-contextualized and re-contextualized to allow new knowledge to be related to a future and changed life situation.“

The learning process takes place in a societal context, *„which partly frames the understanding of the participants and partly frames the output of learning“.*

7.2 The atmosphere in the non-formal in the classroom

The atmosphere should be based on confidence and joy. Teachers create the right atmosphere among the participants. The staff and the participants see the centre as „their place“. A positive attitude towards learning is lived by the whole staff, by the principal of the centre as well as by the caretakers.

Learning is based on the dialogue with participants and on the look on their resources, interests and success.

„It's the point of departure for the guidance counsellors and the teachers to activate as much self-esteem and self-confidence as possible in the participants.“

Teachers work with a high level of skills on the creation of a good learning environment. Time is spent on building up personal relations between teachers/counsellors and the participants. Teachers are aware that participants might have negative experiences with the educational system and respond to negative expectations through being attentive and try to meet the participants where they are and support them to proceed. To develop the personal competences of the participants teachers *„pave the way for new possibilities of articulating, experimenting and developing the participants' options and competences“* by creating *„the room of high skills“*. Pedagogical reflexivity is a necessary competence teachers in non-formal adult education should have.

The motivating learning environment in non-formal adult education is a good basis and starting point for sustainable learning processes of experienced and older citizens.

8. CONCLUSION

Over the two years of the U.N.I.C. Project, the 8 European partners have delved deeply into the learning needs of older people, finding many similarities between all the countries. This includes:

- Understanding the differences between active and inactive older learners
- Identifying the barriers which older people face when accessing learning opportunities,
- Exploring the diversity of older learners, in terms of age, backgrounds, environments, and learning aspirations.
- Carrying out research in our own countries about what older people think about learning
- Witnessing some excellent examples of ways to overcome barriers to learning and to re-integrate older people into the learning environment.

Despite the significant differences in the funding and resources in each country, the fundamental requirements to providing good quality provision and coaxing older people into learning are the same:

- Imaginative engagement activities which older people want to join
- Learning should be fun, enjoyable, relevant to day-to-day living, stimulating and non-threatening.
- Older people are not seen as a homogenous group – there is wide diversity of age, stage of life, culture and social background, environment, aspirations etc.
- Learning should include a wide range of topics and subject matter, reflecting the diversity of older people
- Accessible learning opportunities, in terms of venue, cost, disabled access, timing and duration
- Older people are respected as valuable members of society, with skills and experience to share with other generations.
- Partnership work between services which work with older people
- Reliable public funding to ensure sustainability of project work, and long term investment of facilities
- The wider benefits of learning (social, mental, physical, well being,) are evaluated as well as the formal learning outcomes.
- Public funding needs to be available for life-long learning which relates to all stages of life, and not reserved only at training for employment.
- The investment in providing learning opportunities for older people is balanced by the decrease in health and social care costs.

- Local, national, EU, and international decision makers need to be reminded regularly of the enormous benefits to older people and society in order to act on this information to form policies which protect and develop this work.

The members of the U.N.I.C. Partnership hope to maintain and develop this work with older people, and to build on the many examples of good working practice which have been part of the project.

Vienna, September 2011

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