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## **Did you say European identity, did you say active ageing**



Learning about the close connection between different identities; personal, collective / social, but also European identity and active ageing



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**"There are two kinds of  
Europeans: The smart ones,  
and those who stayed  
behind."**

*Henry Louis Mencken*

## 1. Foreword

Over the last decades the question of European identity has constantly been raised, the concept meaning rather different things to different people. Though you are most probably able to tell what personal and collective identities are, you might not know exactly what European identity is. No wonder! Moreover, in the times of crises (crisis of refugees, financial crisis, economic crisis, etc.) we are ever more getting aware of how vulnerable European identity is. Under such circumstances it is necessary to deepen the understanding of this concept.

On the other hand the concept of active ageing also means different things to different people. A research carried out at Slovenian Third Age University by Sanja Knežević has shown that active ageing is mostly understood from the individual angle. It is about older people being surrounded, being asked for advice, older people learning, being mobile, experiencing well being. The focus is on the individual active ageing while the social dimension of active ageing is practically non-existent, though it should be. Active ageing has both personal and social dimension. Policy makers have a tendency to see active ageing – currently the best political vision of old age – exclusively as prolonged working life, solidarity between generations.

Finally, to what extent are connected the issues of European identity and active ageing?

### Why you should take this course

As an adult or older adult educator you might be involved teaching about Europe or older people. You might be involved in European projects. You might even be the author of such projects, knowing that various cultural, educational, social, scientific exchanges are going on within Europe. In each of the above

mentioned cases you are required to understand the concepts you encounter: European identity and active ageing.

## Objectives

This course is meant to deepen your understanding and the understanding of your students regarding the complex concept of identity, be it personal, collective or European. It is also meant to enable you to make a difference between the active ageing policies and active ageing of individual older people. It will make you understand that in today's society co-operation of generations is needed, based on older people's freedom to work and participate in society.

## Content

This on-line educational course is divided into five units:

Unit 1. Defining one's identity is recomposing a puzzle over and over again About personal, collective and European identity

Unit 2. Older people, active ageing and European identity

Unit 3. Attitudes towards old age and older people and how they are depicted

Unit 4. How well do you know EU? Knowledge supporting European identity

Unit 5. What about your own attitudes towards active ageing and old age?

## Approach / methods

This is a 24-hour on-line course supporting your autonomous learning. In the course of your learning we suggest that we met face-to face twice at the beginning and at the end of the course, each of the face-to-face sessions lasting three pedagogical periods, or 135 minutes. At the end of the course you are supposed confirm or reject true or false statements and participate in a final group discussion. The evaluation of the course will be carried out orally asking you questions:

What have you learned that you consider important for you?

Where and how have you already used the knowledge gained in the course?

## What will you learn

In this on-line course you will first learn about the close connection between different identities; personal, collective/ social, but also specific identities, shall we say professional, female or European identity etc. Understanding the concept of personal identity will enable you to compare and analyse the elements and the dynamics of the European identity particularly in connection with older people and active ageing.

## Difficulties you may encounter. How to learn

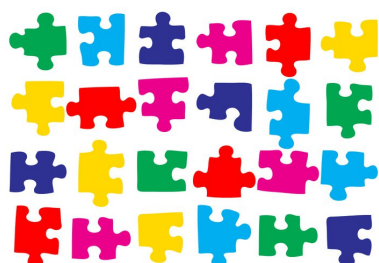
While learning, you might come across concepts you will not understand at first sight. If this happens, think about examples from your everyday or professional life. Moreover, for instance you might not understand the process of individuation as a part of the identity dynamic process creation. If this is the case, search for scholar articles on Internet, consult dictionaries of psychology, use the literature enumerated at the end of the course, or simply ask your colleagues. In short, use different sources of knowledge. Think about the concept of personal identity and make connections with European identity. Think about the existing image of old age and try to find out the differences between the past and today's image of old age and active ageing etc. Always search for connections between what you know and what is a new piece of information for you.

## How is each unit structured and organised

Each unit has the content part. At the end of this course manual you will find the statements controlling your learning. You will be asked either to confirm or reject them.

## Evaluation

You should give the right answer to at least 30 statements at the end of this course and participate in the final face-to-face or by Skype discussion as to get a certificate of attendance.



## Unit 1. Defining one's identity is recomposing a puzzle over and over again. About personal, collective and European identity

This unit deals with the concept of identity starting from personal identity, continuing with collective/social and other specific identities and finishing with European identity that we need to foster. It also deals with the evolution of the European identity narratives over the last seventy years.

### Unit in a nutshell

Identity is not a simple concept  
Identity is a dynamic process  
The narratives of European identity

## You will learn that

*Questioning identity, constant inquiry about self are omnipresent today;*  
*Crises of identity are going on on all levels (individual, institutions, society);*  
*Models, values, norms, tradition and institutions supporting identity are under question;*  
*Combating for one's place in society is constantly present and so is combating for having one's identity recognized;*  
*Identity is characterized by unity, uniqueness, similarity, stability and recognition;*  
*Identity is both individual and collective / personal and social;*  
*Identity is also about reflecting upon identity;*  
*Identity is not a state but a dynamic process;*  
*The narratives of European identity have been changing over the last 70 years;*

## Introduction

Today the theme of identity is on the mind of a lot of people and questioning identity is omnipresent. Philosophy, psychology, sociology and other disciplines as well as journalists and politicians are concerned by identity as there is a constant inquiry about self. Everyone has the need to be socially recognized and valued. You need to be recognized not only for who you are as an individual, but also for what you are as a member of a group. This is even more important if the group is important for how you see yourself (religious group, ethnic group). Negative judgments about your group or fellow group members are felt as a personal matter.

In times of torn family, community, urban and social ties not only individuals search for their identity but also social groups like ethnic communities, regional communities, minority movements, groups of young people born into families of immigrants continue searching for their identity or defending it. The constant search for identity and the need to reaffirm it reveal that social structure has been shattered. Crises of identity are going on on all levels (individual, institutions, society).

When identity is not under threat, there are not many questions about identity asked. On the contrary in times of denial, social interruptions or crises identity is questioned. Who am I? Who are we?

Models, values, norms, tradition and institutions supporting identity are under question as well. Couples, families but also work, social justice and political entities like EU become vulnerable. As a result of it individuals are anxious and feel that they lack power. Social status, social roles and models to follow become less transparent and everybody's place becomes confusing and blurred. Individuals are left to themselves, which leads to their feeling of instability and confusion. Combating for one's place in society is constantly present (Gauleajc, 2014) as if everybody had to defend their personal and social existence and have it recognized by the others. Moreover, competition for a place in society becomes a driver of economic and social life.

It has been generally admitted that identity is in the focus of psycho-social and cultural changes of the today's world. To quote Eric Erikson, "Identity is a central question today, much like sexuality was a central question in the Freud's times".

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## Identity is not a simple concept

Identity is characterized by unity, uniqueness, similarity, stability and recognition (by the person and others). Identity may be objective (personal data like name, birth place, the colour of eyes, height etc.) which are more or less permanent characteristics enabling the others to recognize an individual, while other characteristics like marital status, profession, legal address are less stable, etc. There are also more subjective characteristics of identity: self-awareness, awareness of both being unique and staying the same throughout life. Moreover, there are more specific identities like female, professional, ethnic, social, political identity, etc.

But identity is also about reflecting upon identity, which helps to understand, to know ourselves, and what is more, to establish an inner coherence.

When reflecting upon one's identity, one wants to know who one is and what one would like to become. Thus identity is both state and process. It is what one has achieved and what one is projecting to achieve in the future. Regarding this, André Malraux argues that man is a unity of what he has already achieved and what he will achieve in the future. Thus identity is both reality and desire.

Though at first sight identity is a clear concept (everything that is a part of me, what defines me) when analyzed it appears to be rather a dynamic process based on such contradictions as uniqueness and similarity, enabling the construction and evolution of one's self.

## Identity is a dynamic process

This dynamic process is a set of closely interlaced processes:

-*process of individuation* or differentiation taking place particularly in the early childhood, enabling children to see themselves as different, distinctive from their environment;

-*process of identification* enabling an individual to become similar to others, to take on their characteristics, to discover his or her own models to follow, to experience solidarity with such communities as family etc.;

-*process of narcissist valorization* which is about loving oneself, what can be considered as a source of self-esteem, self-confidence;

-*process of preservation* ensuring continuity, permanence, which makes identity more than just a prolongation of the past. It opens identity up to the future by individual pursuing an ideal, etc.;

These processes are dynamic as they are not stable. On the contrary they are evolutive, are not equally intensive, nor have they the same form at all stages of life. They also tend towards a certain stabilization of the self consciousness. The feeling of identity is constantly under pressure of numerous situations, social roles, relations with others, events like bereavement, illness, loss of job, etc. They can have an immense impact on the image one has of oneself and one's identity.

## The narratives of European identity



Winston Churchill speaking

*The narratives of European identity* have been changing over the last 70 years starting - after the Second World War- with Winston Churchill's "European family" speech about citizens living together in a peaceful Europe, caring to preserve European peace, opposing destructing nationalisms and populism. In 1946 Churchill delivered his famous speech at the University of Zurich, in which he advocated a 'United States of Europe', urging Europeans to turn their backs on the horrors of the past and look up to the future. He declared that Europe could not afford to drag forward the hatred and revenge which sprung from the injuries of the past, and that the first step to recreate the 'European family' of justice, mercy and freedom was "to build a kind of United States of Europe. In this way and in this way only will hundreds of millions of citizens be able to regain the simple joys and hopes which make life worth living".

Later, the narrative had visionary and emotive quality all over the peaceful continent. It ceased to be only a remedy to the economic disaster caused by the Second World War. In the 60's the world was torn apart by cold war between superpowers and European identity was more clearly felt in opposition to cold war.

The common prosperity and progress impacted and continued fostering European identity. Europeans were aware of their common past and were looking forward to constructing their common future.

The European identity definitely exists. Europeans have collective history and symbols that bind them together. Others point at European values and norms (freedom, equality, the legal state, human rights) that would define the European identity. For a long time European identity was barely discussed due to the on-going individualism and increasing economic prosperity. Today European identity has evolved into a serious matter due to global politics, the Brexit, the immigration. Resulting cultural diversity may threaten European identity and solidarity attached to it. Some do not believe in European identity, others think it urgently needs to be revitalized.

Being European is a question that requires a response, preferably, as clear and distinctive as possible. There should not be confusion and uncertainty about who we are and what we stand for. Without clarity one cannot expect immigrants to integrate since it is not clear what they should integrate into.





## Unit 2 Older people, active ageing and European identity

This unit deals with old age and older people as well as active ageing

### Unit in a nutshell

#### Introduction

One of the basic rights older people have is the right to age actively

How does WHO define active ageing; what competencies are needed in old age

Policies supporting active ageing and older people's rights

Older citizens and who represents them at the European level

**You will learn that** *Old age is the age of older people. It begins with older workers and extends over the dynamic third age to the fourth age or the age of dependence;*

*Without meaningful social roles for older people, there is no active ageing;*

*Older people can contribute vastly to social, political, economic and cultural life of the countries, notably as workers, cultural mediators, caregivers, volunteers;*

*The most common and most applied definition of active ageing is the definition formulated by World Health Organisation;*

*Active ageing allows people to realize their potential for physical, social, and mental well-being throughout life and not only in old age, ageing being a lifelong process.*

*There are many policies supporting active ageing and older people's rights; The policy discourse of dependence, old age stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination should be replaced by policies focusing on the contributory role of older people, older people as agents of change and development;*

*Older people seem to face multiple discrimination based on gender, age and ethnicity;*

*There is no coherent, holistic instrument that specifically addresses the older people's rights;*

*In EU older citizens are represented on both the institutional level and the NGO level;*

## Introduction

Old age is the age of older people. It begins with older workers and extends over the dynamic third age to the fourth age or the age of dependence. Through this time people can remain active in their own way, on condition active ageing is culturally accepted and socially as well as politically supported,

Without meaningful social roles for older people there is no active ageing. Not only should older people preserve, develop and engage their competencies in their own life and communities, they should also remain connected with other generations through lucrative work, voluntary engagement and through taking part in decision making processes. In order to be active, at advanced age they can play roles of symbols.

Regardless of their age, cultural and educational background both younger and older people should "lead a life of dignity and independence and should participate in social and cultural life." (Charter of fundamental rights of EU, art. 25.).

Today older people can contribute vastly to social, political, economic and cultural life of the countries, notably as workers, cultural mediators, caregivers, volunteers, grandparents, consumers, innovators and political actors.

Understanding the diversity of older people, empowering them and (re)integrating them into society as well as knowing and respecting their rights and competencies benefits society as a whole. "Recognising (...) people as rights holders means respecting them as full members of society, regardless of their age or any other consideration, such as health status, culture, education, etc.

## One of the basic rights older people have is the right to age actively

The most common and most applied definition of active ageing is the definition formulated by World Health Organisation. Active ageing is defined in different ways. In 2012 Laszlo Andor described active ageing, saying: "Ageing actively means ageing in good health; being more satisfied at work; having the power to take decisions; being able to act as an active citizen; being able to lead a better life. We would also say that ageing actively is when one relates and engages with other generations and one's peers.

One can age actively when one's values are appreciated in society. There are two levels of ageing actively: a personal one and a community one. They have to be interrelated. However, wanting to age actively, one has to overcome stereotypes, prejudices, discrimination and one has to reposition oneself in our changing society.

## How does WHO define active ageing; what competencies are needed in old age

The World Health Organisation defines active ageing, taking into account different dimensions of individual and population ageing. It says: "Active ageing is the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age. It applies to both individuals and population groups."

Thus active ageing allows people to realize their potential for physical, social, and mental well-being throughout life, not only in old age, ageing being a lifelong process. "Health" refers to physical, mental and social well being. Maintaining autonomy and independence is a key goal for older people.

Ageing takes place within the context of friends, work associates, neighbours and family members. This is why interdependence, as well as intergenerational solidarity are an important tenet of active ageing. Active ageing is really about older people's quality of life and how it can be supported through policies. In order to age actively (live well), people should acquire, preserve and maintain different capabilities (knowledge, skills etc.).

## Policies supporting active ageing and older people's rights

The year 2015 was a landmark in social development: the UN Summit adopted the post-2015 agenda, the European Social Charter was 50 years old, and the EU devoted the entire year to development. And Slovenia together with other countries was acting towards an *International Convention On The rights Of Older Persons*.

All this was happening against the backdrop of a rapidly changing global social structure. The global population is ageing and increased life expectancy imposes a heavy burden on traditional public finances and sustainable health systems. At the same time, prolonged life expectancy and advances in technology enable older people to live fuller and more integrated lives. Nevertheless, the inequality gap between the rich and poor remains a significant impediment to social progress.

Older people seem to face *multiple discrimination* based on gender, age and ethnicity. Older people might be discriminated against within their own, very diverse, social group, or by other groups. Inequality and 'ageism' thus hinder progress in bridging the generational gap, in reforming the social contract, and in creating a model for long-term demographic stability and supportive environment. There is a clear need to strengthen inter-generational links and foster human rights awareness and respect for the human rights of people of any age, potentially enabling greater solidarity between generations and thus an inclusive society.

The needs of older people are specific. Despite the fact that the human rights of older persons are in principle addressed in all human rights instruments, there is no coherent, holistic instrument that specifically addresses their rights. One approach to addressing this issue that has been gaining momentum is the adoption of an international convention on the rights of older persons.

## Older citizens and who represents them at the European level?

### a/ *The institutional level*

*The European Commission and the European Parliament* The issues of older citizens are being addressed through the endeavours of various European Institutions, mainly by *the European Commission and the European Parliament*.

The European Commission (EC) The EC seeks public opinion on the issues through promoting public debate, peer reviews, consultations, thematic conferences etc., and prepares proposals in the field of social policy that concern older citizens (employment, social security, volunteering etc.).

*Intergroup on Ageing* is a group within the European Parliament and unites MPs from different committees and sectors who are willing to discuss this particular issue. The Intergroup issues statements directed at the European Council and other EU institutions. The Intergroup is convinced that social protection and employment policies must be linked, that the EU has a key role to play in bringing about reform of pension systems in order to ensure decent pensions for all, giving people a fair share of society's economic prosperity and not just preventing outright poverty. Countries need to provide secure, universal and fully adequate first pillar pensions. It is also necessary to adopt reforms to allow and encourage older people to keep working.

### b/ *The NGO level*

AGE ([www.age-platform.org](http://www.age-platform.org)), the European Older People's Platform, is a European network of around 150 organisations working on behalf of people aged 50+, which directly represent over 28 million older people in Europe. AGE aims to voice and promote the interests of the 150 million people aged 50+ in the European Union and to raise awareness of the issues that concern them most. AGE also aims to give a voice to older and retired people in EU policy debates through the active participation of their representative organisations at EU, national, regional and local levels, so as to input into EU policy development. AGE's work focuses on a wide range of policy areas that impact on older and retired people. These include issues of anti-discrimination, employment of older workers and active ageing, social protection, pension reforms, social inclusion, health, research, accessibility of public transport and of the built environment, lifelong learning and ICT.

There are other important NGO's at this level, some of which specialise in the issues of older people, and some of them that deal with relevant issues as a part of their particular field of activity. Many also play an important international role in the field of research. Below is a selection of some of the more important and relevant NGOs:

- Care (Christian Action Research & Education for Europe): <http://www.careforeurope.org/>
- CEV (European Volunteer Centre): <http://www.cev.be/>
- COFACE (Conf.d.ration des Organisations Familiales de l'Union Europ.enne):  
<http://www.coface-eu.org/>
- CCRE (Council of European Municipalities and Regions): <http://www.ccre.org/>
- EUROCADRES (Council of European Professional and Managerial Staff):  
<http://www.eurocadres.org/>
- Eurocarers (European Association Working for Carers): <http://www.eurocarers.org/>
- Euro Cities: <http://www.eurocities.eu/main.php>
- Euro Health Net: <http://www.eurohealthnet.eu/>

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- European Association for Population Studies: <http://www.eaps.nl/>
- European Federation for Retirement Provision: <http://www.efrp.org/>
- European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities: <http://www.easpd.eu/>
- EURAG (European Federation of Older Persons): <http://www.easpd.eu/>
- European University: <http://www.euruni.edu/Scripts/Index.aspx?idz=2>
- Youth Forum Jeunesse: <http://www.youthforum.org/>

Since 2000 social policy has occupied a much more prominent place in the overall agenda of the EU. After the adoption of the Lisbon Strategy by heads of state or government, a new goal was formulated which stated that economic and social policies should go hand in hand. As a result an ambitious social agenda was formulated, which sets out the social priorities - the Open Method of Coordination – which promotes stronger co-operation and co-ordination between member states on different social issues. This method applies to the areas of employment, social protection (pensions), social inclusion and education.

The ageing society requires changes in the roles of older people and the roles of other generations, including changes in their mutual relationships. Above all, it requires active participation of all citizens within the member states of the European Union.

The policy discourse of dependence, old age stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination should be replaced by policies focusing on the contributory role of older people, older people as agents of change and development.

Intergenerational co-operation should be seen as a condition sine qua non for active ageing. Older citizens should be more present in the shaping of European policies.

Jacques Delors' argument that in the future, "the European dynamics will be much more dependent on the contribution of the European (older) citizens than on the European institutions". (Jacques Delors, *idem*). For this purpose it is most important that European older citizens increase their knowledge about the European Union, its institutions and its achievements. Moreover, better policies, experience and knowledge is/will be the basis of older people's European identity awareness.



## Unit 3 Attitudes towards old age and older people and how they are depicted

This unit deals with old age and older people as well as active ageing

## Unit in a nutshell

### Introduction

What motivates (older) people to be active

### You will learn that

*Through history, older people have always been described in a dichotomist way: with black and white images not corresponding to colorful reality;*

*Positive and negative stereotypes exist: rejection or primitive idealisation of older people; Social roles connect older people with society;*

*Relationships are an important aspect of active ageing;*

*Active ageing can give one's life direction and intention.*

*Older people have to meet their psycho-social needs; cognitive, emotional and social needs, and their need to share their values with people who appreciate them;*

*Active ageing in all its aspects should be lifelong;*

*When older people's primary needs (inborn needs) are met, they have a tendency to meet their higher secondary or acquired needs.*

### Introduction

To illustrate how old age can be regarded, let us quote the following example. Interviewed about old age, the French writer Marguerite Yourcenar was asked: "How do you view old age? 'Black' as Simone de Beauvoir, or as a 'golden' age as they call it in the USA?" Through history, older people have always been described in a dichotomist way: with black and white images not corresponding to colorful reality; and by negative and positive stereotypes (primitive cognitive schemes and therefore easily adopted and spread) demonstrating either rejection or a primitive idealization of older people. Why has this been so? Our tentative answer would be, firstly, stereotyping (attributing generalized group characteristics to individual members) requires little mental effort and is therefore convenient.

Secondly, stereotyping is most powerfully generated by those in the social mainstream who have yet to experience their own old age. As a result, they have a poor understanding of this life stage – an age they perceive as one of frailty, which they have a tendency to compare with their own age and youth. Compared with youth, old age, i.e. later life, has little to be envied, it being a stage in life where many advantages have been lost: health, looks, friends, social status, wealth, independence. Moreover, says Marguerite Yourcenar, "younger people have a short past and a long future in front of them while contrary to them, older people have a long past and a short future ahead. This kind of comparative approach adopted by youth to old age fails to grasp the real otherness and the real nature of older age, dwelling as it does on negative aspects. The burden of social stereotyping even affects the perception of older people, who are unable to describe the real otherness of old age.



*Social roles* (a concept determining one's social identity) are taken on, left behind, or lost as life progresses. Older people lose many roles, but can take on some new ones. A great number of social roles mean more possibilities for personal growth.

Social roles require one's commitment. The greater one's commitment is, the better one's capacity is for learning, for being independent and for being active. The greater one's knowledge and abilities are, the wider one's interests are. The greater one's capacity for taking on more complex responsibilities is, the greater is one's readiness to be generous and to help. The better one's understanding of oneself and others is, the better formed is one's identity (Knowles). Social roles also determine one's position in society.

By playing social roles one constructs *one's position in society*? At first sight it seems that after retirement older people lose their role. Up to retirement they establish a personal and particular social value through organized, paid work. After retirement they may still work - but part time. They can find a new job; they can create new jobs; they can even start a company or a second career; they can indulge in serious leisure time activities; they can become volunteers or members of political parties. Social roles help them to step out into the public space and remain involved in economic and social development.

Social roles demonstrate one's activities but in old age who you are as a person and how you relate to others, rather than what you do, becomes more important. Relationships, therefore, are an important aspect of active ageing. Older people may lose many social roles but nothing can be lost without being replaced by something else. They take on new roles and again they have to meet norms, expectations as to their behavior, and even feelings. And they adapt. They may suffer after losing their job but, after a year or so, they cannot imagine working again, etc. Older people have knowledge they are ready to share, but they will do it only if their willingness is respected and their contribution valued. Therefore, active ageing depends on the expectations of the environment.

*Active ageing can give one's life direction and intention.* Organized education is a way of ageing actively and it structures older people's lives. It enriches one's life; it keeps older people connected with what is going on around them. It can make them feel much more alive and more generous. Older people have to realize their cognitive, emotional and social needs, and their need to share their values with people who appreciate them.

*Active ageing in all its aspects should be lifelong.* Older people cannot be expected to start all of a sudden being active: ageing healthily, nurturing relationships, being active citizens (taking care of public matters), using new technologies etc. are matters that have to be engaged with throughout life

## **What motivates (older) people to be active?**

When approaching older people, one has to understand their motivation for being active? Most of the time their motivation, especially in the case of education, is intrinsic and does not come so

much from outside or from the requirements imposed by tasks, family obligations etc. When older people's primary needs (inborn needs) are met, they have a tendency to meet their higher secondary or acquired needs (cognitive needs, the need for self-actualization, the need of beauty, social needs, the need to share values, etc). Their aspirations, readiness to be active, emotions, their experiential knowledge, the different elements of their motivation have to be understood as much as possible. To this end, one has to grasp older people's present and past, even their childhood and the important impact that was exerted on them by their parents and significant others and their life scenario. To summarize, one has to understand and one has to know what have been the important events in an old person's life. This is the only way to understand why he or she is active in a particular way or does not want to be active in later life.

Active ageing in all its aspects should be lifelong. Older people cannot be expected to start all of a sudden being active: ageing healthily, nurturing relationships, being active citizens (taking care of public matters), using new technologies etc. are matters that have to be engaged with throughout life.



## Unit 4. How well do you know EU. Knowledge supporting European identity

Knowing the structure and functioning of EU fosters older people's European identity

### Unit in a nutshell

#### Introduction

What has shown a research on the relationship between Europe and older citizens  
European identity and (older) people's active citizenship

### You will learn that

*Although based on the principles of the French Revolution – liberty, equality, fraternity – the European Union is not a revolutionary but an intellectual enterprise;*

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*Europe has become a framework for numerous enriching cultural, social, economic and other transactions among its member states;*  
*Member states do not truly understand that "union is a force" and that union means community, giving, as well as ensuring receiving;*  
*EU is believed to have a new chance to tackle, democratically, issues of common and global interest, such as environmental issues, reversing the global trend of the market economy; Most European institutions and advisory bodies (European Commission, European Parliament, European Economic and Social Council) act accordingly;*  
*The relationship between Europe and older citizens has been researched;*  
*The idea of active citizenship can be traced back to ancient Greece;*  
*Moral values like fraternity, freedom equality became the basis of active citizenship;*  
*In the 19th century the concept of legal state was formulated and citizens' rights were secured within national states;*  
*An open public space has been created;*  
*Individual rights are rather secured on both, the European and global levels, and not only within nation states;*  
*As a consequence of globalisation the idea of active citizenship needs to be developed on three levels: the national, European and global level;*  
*European identity is still an abstract concept, loosely formulated and loosely rooted in the social tissues, as indeed is the European active citizenship.*

## Introduction

Although based on the principles of the French Revolution – liberty, equality, fraternity – the European Union is not a revolutionary enterprise, but an intellectual enterprise as much as it is a practical reality.

Over decades EU has become *a framework for numerous enriching cultural, social, economic and other transactions among its member states*. It established a common currency and it has provided for common security. Nevertheless, it has also failed several times and in several ways. Thus, Jacques Delors, Marcel Gauchet, Cohn Bendit and others are convinced that Europe has failed in imposing itself as a political force and it has failed in imposing itself in the processes of globalisation. Moreover, member states do not truly understand that "union is a force" and that union means community, giving, as well as ensuring receiving.

Nevertheless, in times of economic, financial, political and social crises, the *EU is believed to have a new chance, that is, the chance to tackle, democratically, issues of common and global interest, such as environmental issues, reversing the global trend of the market economy* (Habermas, 2009, p.105) and demographic changes. (including ageing population, migrations, ageing workforce). These issues cannot be tackled in isolation, but on the contrary, they should become subject to large-scale public debate and real civil dialogue (Jacques Delors, idem).

Nowadays most European institutions and advisory bodies (European Commission, European Parliament, European Economic and Social Council) act accordingly. *"The development of a European wide political public sphere - that is of a communicative network extending beyond the national borders and specialising in the relevant questions - is of central importance* to the emergence of the European identity, says Habermas (2009, p.87). It is time for Europe and its institutions to become an agora, a

truly deliberative space, including the representatives of all its citizens.

We thought it would be interesting to find out to what extent the relations between European Union and its older citizens has become a reality. To what extent older citizens identify with EU, to what extent they are aware of their European identity.

## **What has shown a research on the relationship between Europe and older citizens**

*A research on the relationship between Europe and older citizens conducted by Slovenian Third Age University and its French partner organisation Old up from Paris with more than 500 respondents in each country has yielded the following results:*

The majority of the respondents report that Europe has changed their everyday life; political changes, (50,7 %), economic changes, (65,4 %), social changes (46,4 %) and cultural changes (70,9).

The majority of the respondents report that educational systems should be unique (51,5 %) and cultures should be mixed (72,3 %).

The majority of the respondents are of opinion that their co-citizens have no opinion of European citizenship (49,6 %).

The minority of the respondents report that they know associations related to Europe (36,3 %) and only some of them are their members (11,5 %).

Media and cultural exchanges would be the best vehicles consolidating the concept of European citizenship. Following are associations, forums, seminars, meetings and politicians.

The majority said they take part in European elections (78,3 %).

## **European identity and (older) people's active citizenship**

Are you sure you know what active citizenship is? The idea of active citizenship is not new but can be traced back to ancient Greece. Greek citizenship was primarily built on the obligations, that each citizen had to the city (polis) government. To be an active citizen- one who took part in political life was considered to be a moral duty. One was morally obliged to take an active part in common polis matters, if one wanted to be respected as a citizen and a human being.

In the 1700 s there was a redrafting of the citizenship concept. Moral values like fraternity, freedom equality became the basis of active citizenship.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century *the concept of legal state was formulated and citizens' rights were secured within national states.*

*The citizens of Europe should ideally view themselves not only as British, German, and Italian, etc. but also as European citizens and indeed as citizens of the world to which they are connected with rights and obligations and work they do for community.*

Since its establishment, the geographical shape of European Union has been changing. Its borders

are now rather open, an open public space has been created. These developments influenced the existence of European society, *have shaped a new political community of nations, and the emerging public space.*

*Individual rights* are today rather secured on both, the European and global levels, and not only within nation states. Typically, social rights will be secured by the nation state, the rights in relation to the internal market will be guaranteed by the European Union and the UN will guarantee human rights. As a consequence of globalisation the idea of active citizenship needs to be developed on three levels: the national, European and global level.

Nevertheless, European identity is still an abstract concept, loosely formulated and loosely rooted in the social tissues, as indeed is the European active citizenship.



## Unit 5. What about your own attitudes towards active ageing and old age?

This unit approaches your own attitude towards active ageing and old age

### Unit in a nutshell

How do you see / imagine old age and why?

Stereotypes about ageing. To what extent do they / can they reflect reality?

Questions

### How do you see / imagine old age and why?

Refer to the pictures below. Which of them best describes your image of old age?



A.



B.



C.



D.



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E.

### **Stereotypes about ageing. To what extent do they / can they reflect reality?**

- A. When did you first feel that you were old? What happened?
- B. Comparing your old age with your young age, in what way are you richer and in what way are you poorer?
- C. Is there a difference between how you view yourself and how other people view you? If your answer is yes, please describe it.
- D. Can you name three positive or negative stereotypes about older people?

Any social group is burdened by stereotypes (primitive cognitive schemes) and this often applies to socially marginalized groups, in particular older people.

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**Please, tell whether the following statements are true or false**

(1) The concept of identity means different things to different people.

True False

(2) The majority of older people know EU associations.

True False

(3) Crises foster identity.

True False

(4) European Union is a revolutionary enterprise.

True False

(5) Active ageing has individual and social dimension.

True False

(6) Active ageing is much more than prolonged working years.

True False

(7) There are better political visions of old age than active ageing

True False

(8) Questioning identity has always been omnipresent

True False

(8) Identity is supported by values, norms but not institutions.

True False

(9) Combating for once place in society is not present in the times of crises .

True False

(10) Identity is characterised by controversial elements.

True False

(11) Identity can be only subjective and not objective.

True False

(12) Identity is personal and social

True False

(13) The narratives of European identity have not changed at all over the last decades.

True False

(14) Identity is not a dynamic process but a state.

True False

(15) Narcissist valorisation is a source of self-denial

True False

(16) Older workers are not what is understood by older people.

True False

(17) There is no active ageing without social roles for older people

True False

(18) The more social roles we play, the less we are socially included.

True False

(19) Old age policies are mostly based on the discourse of dependence.

True False

(20) There many instruments that address older people's rights.

True False

(21) Everybody participates in cultural life and social life

True False



- (22) Older people's inclusion benefits older people but not the others.  
True False
- (23) One wants to age actively. even if one is not socially valued and respected.  
True False
- (24) WHO takes into account dimensions of individual and population ageing.  
True False
- (25) Active ageing is about using one's potentials.  
True False
- (26) Intergenerational co-operation is not a crucial element of active ageing.  
True False
- (27) Quality of older people's life is not a matter of EU policies.  
True False
- (28) Intergenerational links and fostering human rights are essential elements of active ageing.  
True False
- (29) Older people have exclusively age specific needs.  
True False
- (30) Older citizens are represented on the level of institutions.  
True False
- (31) Policies exclusively prevent older people's poverty.  
True False
- (32) Only today older people are described with white and black images.  
True False
- (33) Older people do not have exactly the same psycho-social needs as adults.  
True False
- (34) Active ageing starts in old age.  
True False
- (35) Older people have primary needs to the exclusion of higher needs.  
True False
- (36) Stereotypes are always negative.



True    False

(37) Social roles remain the same throughout adulthood.

True    False

(38) How you relate to others is most important in old age.

True    False

(39) Older people's motivation is mostly extrinsic.

True    False

(40) We all agree as to what active ageing is.

True    False

(41) Member states understand the importance of the EU Union.

True    False

(42) Active citizenship is a new concept.

True    False

(43) European identity is well rooted in the social tissues

True    False

(44) The majority of older people know EU associations.

True    False

(45) Individual rights are secured only within nation states.

True    False