CONCEPTUAL GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATORS ENGAGING IN OLDER ADULT EDUCATION

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Foreword

These Conceptual Guidelines for Educators Engaging in Older Adult Education initially called Methodology have not been conceived as a collection of methods (indeed they are no different form methods in adult education) but more widely as much needed philosophy of older adult education and active old age that any method in older adult education has to be based on. In fact this is what distinguishes adult education and older adult education. Therefore these guidelines are based on empirically tested theories that can be found in different disciplines like gerontology, andragogy, sociology, psychology all of them being reference disciplines of one basic discipline we are interested in: geragogy or educational gerontology. These guidelines are exclusively focused on characteristics of non-formal older adult education and on normal versus pathological old age. Therefore no special reference has been made to the declining health condition of older people like possible poor vision, hearing abilities, mobility problems, etc.

Our aim was to focus the readers' attention away from negative or positive stereotypes about older people and their learning, from stereotypes about their possible deficiencies. What we wanted was to increase the understanding of the need for new attitudes and new approaches to old age, older people and their learning in contemporary Europe, focusing on older people's human, social and cognitive capital to be contributed to the development of society as a whole.

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Introduction

This conceptual guide for adult educators engaging in older adult education is primarily meant to accompany the outputs of the EU P3AE project i.e. educational programmes to be designed and delivered by partner organisations. More widely, it appeals to all those who are and will be developing and delivering educational programmes for older adults and particularly within the P3AE project: English for older beginners, English for travelling, Older people's European identity, Catalonian language for writing, and of course the planned on-line learning platform. Attention of the reader is drawn primarily to the fact that older learners are a special audience of learners that programmes have both *individual and social aims* that programmes for older learners are equally meant for the *transmission of the existing and the construction of new knowledge* as well as for *empowerment of older people*. These manifold aims are to be pursuit in any type and format of education supporting diversity where education has several functions. One of them is social inclusion. *Education in later life* is far from being a simple provision of educational programmes. It is also *a means of collective liberation and emancipation of groups of older people*, too often devaluating their own learning, too often subordinated to other generations and social groups, too often at the edge of the social mainstream.

Older adult education is a response to both individual and societal needs. It has been long wrongly believed that older adult education is concerned only with participants' life satisfaction and wellbeing, notwithstanding their age or social status. This exclusively psychological approach to older adult education has done more harm than good to the education of older people, old age being primarily a social phenomenon.

Education of older people is and has to be useful for a wider circle of individuals, communities, society as a whole. It should contribute to improving *social justice on all levels: distributive, cultural and symbolic level*. It should prepare the learners for understanding old age and ageing, their better living in society and shaping it at the same time.

Over the last decades our societies have been faced with major interruptions mostly brought about by a change in the way of producing (from machines to computers and modern technology). As a result of it, power and wealth are being redistributed. New social groups got hold of power and wealth bringing with them their own values and priorities, their ways of behaving. As a result of it, changes occur affecting older people's lives and position in

society. Older people are not approached as homogeneous groups anymore which was the case in the industrial times, but more as individuals, at least they should be. A new way of ageing is required. Education of older people is a constituent part of this new, so the called *active ageing whose nature is quite individual.*

I. The conceptual background of educational programmes in older adult education

The P3AE project and courses are meant to create tools for educating and training adult educators/mentors specialized or to be specialised- in the education of older people. Hence, educators/mentors of older learners cannot focus only on their subjects or topics, their disciplinary knowledge, methods etc., but have to bear in mind that *education of older people is also about the empowerment of older people*. Being involved in education, adult educators/mentors and older learners should *change their attitude towards old age, older people and ageing*, and develop an *array of relevant standpoints.* Older adult education should be radically *transformative.* Educators/mentors play an important role for this matter.

The P3AE project is indirectly devoted to education of those who are over 55 years of age. The educational programmes can be for their *personal growth, paid work, social roles, for overcoming life transitions, ageing actively, active citizenship* etc.

Older people or *people in later life* are not a homogeneous group since older people belong to various groups: *older workers, older people facing retirement, older people after retirement and after the professional working life phase, older people whose ageing is not normal but pathological, etc.* Older people who are *not* targeted by this project are those with pathologies and those who frail and in institutional care, though older adult education at an advanced age can play an important role in the preservation of autonomy and encouragement of social participation in later life. Hence, from both an individual and societal perspective, it is important to promote the educational activities of all groups of older people. *Active older people with positive perceptions of self and ageing maintain their mental and physical good shape, participate in community affairs and politics, and engage in intergenerational dialogue.* Moreover, despite the fact that people in later life are burdened by *social stereotypes about their passivity*, dissatisfaction with life, useless of their work and learning, despite their tendency to think that it is not up to them to intervene in community life, we, the P3AE project members, consider people in later life as *full and active members of local, national and European communities.* We further believe that for this matter *education in later life is important, having a strong impact on both the learner and community*.

The P3AE project includes the development of an educational and training platform for *adult educators* specialized in the education of older people, so that they may enable older learners:

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- to stay integrated in society or to get reintegrated,
- to change their own, and to some extent also the social, out-dated image of them picturing them as not very active and not very willing to participate in the life of community,
- to better understand their own needs and issues and the need for intergenerational bonds within the changing society (solidarity, co-existence and cooperation among generations).

Any type and format of education for older people has its topic, of course. But simultaneously any type and format of education in later life is *education for empowerment.* Therefore educators/ mentors and older learners engaged in educational programmes for older learners, notwithstanding the main topic and the aims of the programme, are concerned with achieving *a better understanding of what old age in contemporary European society is and could be.* Therefore, they need knowledge about policies concerning old age and people in later life, etc. Awareness should be increased about *the right of old*er people *to know and to have a say in contemporary society of equal rights and opportunities* (flexibility and security at work, access to education, age barriers at work, diversity at work, the right to work, the right to receive a pension).

Knowledge is needed about *mandatory or compulsive retireme*nt, about *active ageing* in the broader sense of the word, opportunities to *cooperate with other generations* after retirement, voluntary activities, style(s) of life in retirement and education in later life, *culture in old age* as a way of constructing dignity, participation in the decision-making processes within communities etc., the extremely diverse aspects of old age.

To sum up, older learners, participants in educational programmes should increase their knowledge of the educational topic but also their knowledge about themselves, the value of their learning, their age specific issues, their position in society and about their possible contributory social role. Moreover, educational in later life is transformational, changing both educator's and learner's attitude and standpoints towards older people and ageing. Older people need to be active, and therefore knowledgeable.

The changing society

Older people in older adult education are expected to gain also an in- depth view of the major social changes affecting all generations and the relationships between them. Enlightened adaptation of older people to these changes can be a topic and an aim of European projects.

a) Paid work: Today's forms and characteristics of work, performed by the current middle generations, differ from Keynesian times. The new types of employment tend to affect the lives and work of younger and older people and their participation in different communities (family, working communities, local community, etc.).

Jobs emerge, change and disappear more quickly than they used to. Occasional paid or voluntary work performed by older people can result in new full time jobs for younger people. Initially an activity develops step by step. Work can be then performed in the form of occasional activities and occasional paid work. Such work is more easily taken on by older people, since they already have some regular income.

Occasional activities can later become full time jobs for younger people. Older people do not "steal" jobs from younger people, since they take on different types of activities compared to younger people. *In today's societies, looking for solutions for older people means also finding solutions for the above-mentioned groups that also exist within communities.*

b) *New technologies* are not very accessible for all older people; *if any members of the community are denied access to modern technology, all generations and the whole community are affected.* If older people are left without access to information they cannot integrate into the community, they cannot keep pace with progress, they cannot enter the e-economy, e-government, e-education, e-communication, etc. and, *thus, they are ever more dependent on the active working population. Without older people having access to technology, the communities are less integrative for them and the cohesion of society is under question. It is urgent to decrease the digital divide. The technological knowledge need by younger people is also needed by older people in this digitally evolving world.*

c) The urgent need to preserve human and social capital that is being neglected: older people are possessors of non-tangible and invisible cultural heritage (experiential knowledge, skills, beliefs, customs, norms, etc.) that needs to be preserved, maintained and passed onto other older and younger generations. *All generations are important, not only generations in the middle, since generations ensure both continuity and social cohesion. The overlooked abilities and knowledge of older people form an important part of human and social capital*.

The lack of infrastructural networks enabling older people to stay integrated in the society, leads to their social exclusion and isolation. How can older people create and maintain their social

networks? How can they obtain support: material and emotional support, information and knowledge? How can they start dealing with community matters and how can they participate in society?

What networks of public institutions and organised structures are available to the elderly in today's Europe? How can older people re-enter society, or rather, how can we prevent older people from being excluded?

d) <u>Ageing society requires active old age – new ways for social integration:</u> the ageing society has brought about more interest in older people*. Older people, like anybody else, can become reintegrated into society only by being active*. The experience of many retired people has shown that they may be more successful when joining new social groups, by getting involved in new activities. *For older people to have their position changed within communities and society it is necessary, however, to undertake such activities that are goal oriented and can bring about change in their personal life and in society.*

f) <u>There is an urgent need to</u> better understand the media and how media manipulate our opinion, and to increase one's political literacy and combat populism and nationalism.

g) Older people as all others <u>need political education</u> as to take standpoints towards major social and political issues (migration, nationalism, populism etc.)

The need for active ageing and its characteristics

Changing society (from modern to post modern informational society) <u>requires active ageing</u> which is more in line with modern social developments.

Social roles (a concept determining one's social identity) are taken on, left behind, or lost through life. Older people lose many roles, but they can take on some new ones.

A great number of social roles means more possibilities for personal growth.

Social roles require one's commitment. *The greater one's commitment*, the better one's capacity for learning, for being independent, for being active, the greater one's knowledge and abilities, the wider one's interests, the greater one's capacity for taking on more complex responsibilities, the greater is one's readiness to be generous and to help, the better is one's understanding of oneself and others, the better is formed one's identify (Knowles). Social roles determine also 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 stay role less. Till retirement they construct their personal and particularly social value through organised 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 into serious leisure time activities, and they can become volunteers, members of political parties (Stebbins, 2010). Social roles help them stepping out into public space and staying involved in economic and social development.

After retirement, older people mostly lose their professional identity. "I have a PhD in microbiology, but you know this was only good for my profession" said a student at the third age university in Slovenia. Social roles demonstrate one's activities but in old age it usually becomes less important what you do than what you are as a person. How you relate to others. Relationships are therefore 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 behaviour and even feelings. And they adapt. They may suffer from 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 readiness is respected and their contribution is valued. Therefore, active ageing depends on the expectations of the environment.

Each life needs a direction and needs to be intentional. Those who know where they are headed and why get up in the morning to "live their dreams" and are glad to be alive like " a four year old child who in the morning eagerly looks through the window to see if that day he or she will be able to play outdoors" (Marguerite Yourcenar). Active ageing can give one's life direction and intention.

Organized education is a way of ageing actively and it structures older person's life. It makes one's life richer; it keeps older people connected with what is going on around them. It can make them much more alive and more generous.

Older people have to meet their cognitive, emotional, 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 their relationships, being active citizens

(taking care of public matters), using new technologies etc. without having been engaged in this way 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 times their motivation, especially in the case from outside. When older people's primary (inborn) needs are met, they have a tendency to meet their higher secondary or acquired needs (cognitive needs, the need for self-actualisation, 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 that 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 (Eric Berne).

To sum up, one has to understand and one has to know what have been the important events in their life. *This is the only way to understand why they are active in a particular way or do not want to be active in later life.*

Stereotypes, prejudices, old age discrimination, old age harassment are to be combated through education

To illustrate how old age is being thought of, let us quote the following example. When interviewed about old age, the French writer Marguerite Yourcenar was asked: "How do you view old age? Black as Simone de Beauvoir or golden as 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 colourful reality; and by negative and positive stereotypes (primitive cognitive schemes and therefore easily adopted and spread) demonstrating either rejection or primitive idealization of older people.

Why has it been so? Our tentative answer would be: age-related stereotypes are produced by generations in the middle and in the social main stream, which had not experienced *their* own old age yet. As a result of it, they have poor understanding of this life stage which they have a tendency to compare with their own age and youth. It is a stage of life, where many losses take place: health, looks, friends, social status, wealth, independence. Moreover, younger people have a short past and a long future in front of them, older people a long past and a short future

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says Marguerite Yourcenar. This kind of approach to old age does not allow us to grasp the real difference of this life stage, the real nature of this life stage and it seems to be much easier to approach it using stereotypes, the process of comparison being reduced to the distinctive features, only to pluses and all minuses which does not bring about the understating of the real »otherness« of older people (Dollar, 2010). Not even us, older people, are able to describe the really different nature of old age, being ourselves under the burden of social stereotypes. Now, that the old cultural organisation of ages has been shaken by new ways of production by the post-modern redistribution of power among social groups, stereotypes, prejudices and old age discrimination should be tracked, evidenced, should be systematically pointed at, discussed, alleviated or eradicated, if possible. But is that possible? In the long run, there is hope concerning stereotypes these being less rigid, cruel and hostile and less insensitive to new information than prejudices. Stereotypes are at the crossroads of our own experience and the predominating, norms and social values which we adopt without reflection. Well, finally **old age discrimination** dwells upon attributes that cannot be changed (race, age etc.).

Before going on discussing about the nature of old age stereotypes more in depth, let us underline, that there are not just <u>stereotypes</u> regarding old age. There are also <u>prejudices</u> and there are also <u>old age discrimination and old age harassmen</u>t. These phenomena are due to the natural opposition of generations, to their struggle for power and wealth, being it hidden, mild or overt. This natural opposition becomes exacerbated following major social interruptions, sweeping away older generations. Just recall the Second World War and the change of generations at the end of it, or the recent major changes in Eastern European countries. We suggest you compared television and radio programmes of Eastern European countries with those in the West of Europe. In the East, there would be very few older faces or voices, older thinkers would not be often referred to, etc. Having said that, two decades ago we were particularly surprised by the situation in Estonia and its destitution of the old "nomenclature" and thirty years old ministers taking over the government. To conclude, major social interruptions are not in favour of the old cultural organization of ages. After such interruptions and many major social changes, all generations have to reposition themselves in society and during this process the number and the force of stereotypes naturally get increased.

There are many social stereotypes, some of them being: older people are poor learners, they learn to kill time, they learn because they have a lot of leisure time, their knowledge is not useful, they are physically, psychologically, socially unfit to participate fully in society.

Today we are celebrating the Old People's Day was announced at the national Slovenian radio, only 15 years ago. And the presenter going on: "At 10.00 o' clock is scheduled a programme on dementia". According to stereotypes about later life, less knowledgeable workers are older workers and so they are "not a good investment". Far before getting retired, older workers are supposedly not interested in learning, values represented by older people like having time and being more sensitive to relationships are at the edge of the social values, thus squeezing older people to the edge of society.

Is education of older adults different?

The way in which children learn is adapted to their stage of development while youngsters, adults and older adults learn according to their social situation and psychological state. Education changes from one age to another age of life.

Is education of older people different? For future educators in older adult education it is important to get a clear picture about later life and characteristics of older adult education. We all are impacted by the old out-dated stereotype about older people and old age. These stereotypes have a tendency to impact mentors' behaviour and older adult education. If a mentor believes his or her learners are able of effective learning, he or she will teach them a lot and will help them learning and constructing new knowledge. Moreover, a mentor has to help older student to abandon the social negative and positive stereotypes about ageing and has to overcome them, as to freely indulge into the transmission of knowledge and learning.

Education of older people has its characteristics. Mentors do emphasise them, take them into account if they are familiar with them. Basically, mentors should approach older learners as if they were already there, where they are able to come.

Moreover, education in later life is open to different social influences. Later life education is not neutral since it happens within a political context. Whoever starts and is in charge of third age universities "does politics "in his or her own way. Third age universities may reproduce the social relationships of power and influence. U3As may reproduce unequal relations in later life with special emphasis *on positive ageism, elitism, gender, and third ageism*. Later life education

is most valuable as long as it is based on the values of social justice, social levelling, and social cohesion.

> Ageing is not only a psychological but also a social phenomenon.
> Under capitalism older people do not constitute a homogeneous group.
> There are environmental factors impacting ageing.
> The political context influences learning in later life.
> Later life education should not reproduce unequal social relationships (special emphasis on elitism, gender and third ageism).

First age- children have to be curious as to survive and go through schooling

A quick survey of the characteristics of education in different ages of life helps educators understand that models from the previous ages cannot be simply transposed to the education in later life which is radically different.

In childhood, our learning is dense. It is normal, since children need learning to survive.

Childhood and youth are difficult since children and youngsters are subordinated to adults. In the process of socialisation, a child and a youngster experience lots of limits, they are subordinated to orders and imperatives.

There are not many children to whom parents would live enough psychological and social space to express themselves, to express what they really are deep down. Alice Miller wrote *The Drama of the Gifted Child*: The Search for the True Self describing how dramatic is being a child? Is childhood always a trauma and obstacle for us to become what we could become? Self- actualization, becoming what we could become - is not often dealt with in the literature for parents and parenting. *Creativity and the search for meaning and value play key roles in human life.*

Childhood and youth are impacted by adults' decisions. Before children go to school their curiosity is hindered. They say that children have to be upraised. Finally, children's curiosity is hindered by school, scores, certificates, etc. Children go to school because they have to. Have we ever thought of the amount of violence done to children?

Children learn a lot in an informal way, by observing, imitating, exploring reality, gaining new experiences. If family upbringing is too strict, it can make children suffocate, deny their potentials.

Children need to learn a lot in a short time. They learn by trial and error. In kindergarten, a child also learns a lot, the kindergarten programme being structured pursuing clear aims. Children are under the impact of educators. When a child is three years old he can go to kindergarten

and he gradually understands that his mother is not abandoning him each single day and does not experience emotional trauma when he is separated from her. Education of children is so specific that educators have to complete specialized, at least three year lasting tertiary studies of pre-school education

Schooling is just one possible format of education

After kindergarten, it is up to school to continue the children's *secondary socialisation*. An important aim of socialisation is that children learn what they have to do and *get intellectualised.*

In the times of schooling children are under the pressure of formal education led by specialised teachers. The first four grades of elementary school keep the family or kindergarten character. Then children are taught by subject matter teachers. The ties between children and their teachers get loose and become more formal. *Schooling kills curiosity and* children start being dependent on extrinsic motives for their learning. Their primary motivation and curiosity decrease. Children develop a special school subculture trying to achieve their aims in an easy way making as little effort as possible. Many children hate school. They cannot imagine *that learning with joy* is possible. Our experience tells us as well that they are surprised by the fact that older people help each other to learn.

The dynamics of the attitude towards education changes when young people go to university. There young people feel free studying what they want to study.

They have a choice. If they are lucky to be enrolled in programmes where they feel to be successful, they slowly regain curiosity and the joy of learning. Namely, today young people are free to search for new knowledge on Internet, Facebook, YouTube. They have their own sources of knowledge and are less dependent on teachers etc. In some segments of knowledge, they can be better than their teachers.

Schooled society imposes formal learning with rules, regulations and laws hindering spontaneous development of non-formal education. On the other hand, non-formal learning keeps getting more spread with different sources of knowledge at the learners' disposal.

Education of adults by no means equates schooling

In the second age, young adults and mid aged adults are subordinated to extrinsic social demands, social obligations resulting from various social roles they play (couple, parenting, professional work, public functions, recreation, health, fun). Adults mostly recall their *happy,*

careless childhood and *youth* being taken away by family and many social tasks, responsibility for oneself and others. Dreams and wishes about what they could learn are their personal secret. There are few possibilities in the second age for them to meet their wishes and dream out their dreams.

This second age has advantages. Mid aged adults shape society according to their wishes. They set up social rules for all generations. Generations in the middle are more in public than in private sphere. They have to face lots of social pressure and therefore have to compromise a lot.

They decide about public life, politics and economy. They retain the greatest possible social power in their hands by which they readily impose on other generations. Most decisions are taken according to *their* needs. How well they meet other people's needs merely depends on their empathy.

As a future mentor in older adult education you have to forget about *the social stereotype that only schooling is education*.

The generalised perception of education being only schooling would be in much your way in older adult education. Education of adults is not school and is not schooling. In education of adults there are study groups, study circles, there is non-formal education, individual learning projects, autonomous learning, individual mentoring, e-education, distance learning and many other formats.

Education of adults (young adults and mid aged adults) responds to extrinsic situations and tries to meet the highest but narrow needs for knowledge. Mid aged adults often say, "When I get retired I will learn…, I will fulfil my dreams…"

Education of adults cannot be schooled, though policy makers often try to do it as to control adult learning. Schooled society is a way to defend against important civilisation changes and the new information- communication society. It is therefore important that mentors make a clear distinction between learning, education and schooling. Learning is a wide process changing man under the influence of external factors. Only one part of learning is education. It has certain characteristics like it has to have targets, evaluation, during the process and at the end. Schooling is narrower, being only one format of education.

Adult education is characterised by open communication between adult learners and teachers, relationship based on equality, learning contents adapted to adults as well as methods.

Adulthood is a long phase of life. Each age has its own social, economic and psychological characteristics.

Education of older adults is a part of adult education. There is no adult education today without older adult education. We all need knowledge and education has become a lifelong process, in afterschool education of adults there is no state curriculum, education meets individual and social needs. It responds to personal interests and ambitions. Even if education of adults leads to a certificate, adults already have a lot of knowledge.

Educators of adults are involved in a creative process of shaping learning and activity goals together with those who will learn i.e. together with their learners.

Adult students are more curious, but their education is one amidst their many tasks. Lots of adult education is for work, family life, knowledge related to building flats or houses getting nested. Though adults are more motivated to get knowledge, they are under numerous social pressures and have numerous obligations, their attention being split between numerous targets. Gaining knowledge is just one of adults' tasks.

Adults learn in groups, individually, formally, non-formally. Adult education is performed by professional adult educators, specialised in their field. Autonomous learning and individual tasks are omnipresent.

There are different phases of adulthood. *Young adults* learn to plan their career and to climb socially, etc. *Adults in the middle* have to learn for professional career, they need specialised knowledge, and they learn to solve existential problems. Adults- if they are learnable- progress quickly. They are able to learn autonomously. [1]

Education in the third age and its characteristics

Now that we have learned about the previous life phases we will be better off to understand the characteristics of older adult education. Older people are most affected by the loss of the previous social status that takes place following the retirement, ceasing of some work interpersonal relationship-, emptying the family nest, and the decreasing number of possibilities to meet one's emotional needs and the fact that they had not been prepared for the coming changes brought about by the third age.

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[1] Krajnc, A. (2013) Is eductaion of older adults different? In: *Characteristics of older adult education. Ljubljana,* Društvo za izobraževanje za tretje žiiljenjsko obdobje.

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Life after retirement has to be filled in with new contents, new targets are to be set. Most of the education in younger years was in the function of preparing people for work, but the period of professional work is getting ever shorter, much shorter than the one of the third age. Older workers have difficulties getting a new job. This is a developmental and world phenomenon. The second age has been downsized to two decades. The third age needs preparation and training of older people facing retirement, structuring time, finding new life contents, new targets. Nobody has ever taught us what to do in the third age.

Pre-retirement education seems to be intimidating but it helps giving content to one's life. This is essential for active ageing since no society can be healthy if a quarter of its inhabitants are socially excluded.

Ways older people take after retirement are very personal, depending on what they know, their competencies, their social and psychological needs. The old image of old age (about older people being passive, taking rest, being exclusively dressed in dark colours, etc.) has been replaced by new images.

Older people's social status used to be connected with society. Somebody was a doctor, a receptionist, a worker. After retirement, the differences between people get blurred. *Older people's social status depends on who they are and not that much on what they are.*

Older people face a lot of changes. They have to reposition themselves in society.

Older people are highly motivated for learning, they are curious, they tend to learn with joy. Living at the edge of the mainstream, older people are also freed of social pressures and responsibility. So, they can listen to their needs and wishes and meet them. They have a tendency to fulfil their dreams.

Their targets used to be set from outside, but now they have to set them themselves. *They have lost their working relationships. Now, they have to establish new ones with new people.* They need to renew their emotions to meet their needs (safety, social belonging, love, self-esteem, curiosity, beauty and self-actualization). We are social beings experiencing not only biological but also social birth. No wonder, older people depend on their social environment! If older people do not create new relationships, if they do not meet their needs, they get to be a burden to their families. Personal interrelationships are not born just like that. *People are connected with others by activities*. Older people have to initiate them and learn how to carry

them out. The old image of old age brings about much economic, social, health pathology. Older people are not a burden to their family, relatives, society if they are active.

Personal relationships are by nature relationships of mutual use. Pathology is not triggered by use, but by misuse of each other. *Healthy relationships are based on giving and receiving.* Without this process, there is no possibility for older people to be socially included.

The educational needs of older people are anchored in their personal and social situation. Educational targets are subordinated to self-actualisation, active ageing, active citizenship and other social needs and objectives. *Active ageing is* not just an individual wish but should be dealt with more widely. It is *a social need* as well.

In a changing society, everybody has to learn and contribute to social targets.

Education freed of pressure, good relationships with members of the study group and mentor make education successful

Older people are not ready for education in any circumstances. Their decision to enrol in education has been taken out of their own will and they expect to experience quality relationship in education. Mostly they do not have enough social contacts and are emotionally undernourished. They have difficulties meeting their primary inborn psycho-social needs (Abraham Maslow, 1971). The need for safety, social belonging, love, etc. Without other people, these and other needs cannot be met. In education, older people search for possibilities to meet their emotional needs, study groups being a relatively stable social form of shaped interpersonal relationships and also a primary social group.

The need for interpersonal relationships is wrongly interpreted as the need for socialisation. Older people are said to be enrolled in education to socialise and not to learn. But this is far from being true. Older people are the most motivated and hardworking learners.

Older learners are also a choosy audience. They do not remain in education, no matter what. They stay, if they feel that they are accepted. If they feel that good relationships will not be possible, they quit.

Older people need new targets as to be active and new knowledge as to structure their life

Schools teach us how to live in a family and professionally. Our social roles and activities are thus determined from outside. Following the retirement, this task has to be taken over by individual older people themselves, since there are not enough structures in society to care for

them. So, older people have to find targets for themselves and reach them over decades of their new life. Today, active ageing is not just a policy, it is a part of social and healthy development of each person. In the last decades of their life, older people have to have personal and social targets as not to be a burden to other generations and society.

Connected with wider community older people preserve their vitality, they are less sick and have good relationships with other generations because they are more self- confident and independent. It happens quite often that older people say" This is the best part of my life. I feel that I have more possibilities, to become what I can become." Mentors' task is to help their older learners become what they can become by treating them as they were already there. People are most happy if they can express themselves. Older people are free to choose what will be their activities. They are ready to give a lot.

Active ageing and education are interconnected. For new activities, new knowledge is needed. A retired employee would like to tell stories, but to do that she needs new knowledge and she enrols in the study circle "The art of telling stories". She probably feels that she has potentials. Older learners can enrol into educational programmes, but they can also learn autonomously, have their own study projects. If he or she is motivated for education he or she can find many possibilities. Learning society offers learning accompanying any activity.

Fortunately, self- actualisation is not exclusively for older people. Some children, young people, adults find a way to self-actualisation, though social pressure against it is high.

Towards understanding later life, older learners' needs and issues and them active role in the community

In most Western European countries, old age did not emerge as a political and social issue until the 1950s. After the Second World War, Europe was mainly interested in repairing the damage and looking towards the future focussing on younger generations, often forgetting about older people. Older people were portrayed by social stereotypes as passive not interested in any kind of participation in society, not even able to think well about what they want and what they need.

An adult educator should be familiar with values and concepts concerning older people, old age, the style of life of older people, pension schemes, active ageing, the right to a pension and the right to work, the right to social security, flexible security, etc. *He or she should be aware that older people are not all the same, as actually they are all different, much more*

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different than the individuals within the younger generations. Therefore, he or she *should stand for the right to be different in later life, to have his or her own style of life*; not all older people are patients and their ageing is not necessarily pathological, but rather normal, not all older people are poor, not all older people are helpless or functionally illiterate. *An active senior citizen should therefore stand up against the discourse of weakness and dependence* adopted in most policies, the media, public statements and other texts about people in later life and generally against the stereotypes burdening older people.

Moreover, not all older people are grandmothers and grandfathers, as *they can have different social roles.* They can be workers, volunteers, learners, etc. They differ according to the status and socio-economic position they have in society. They have different needs if they are employed or not, if they are volunteers or not, if they live alone or in a family, if they have a partner or not, if they have managed to create a large or a small social network, if in their social network younger people are included, if this network is a source of emotional support and information, if it is an open network, or if it is a closed one consisting mainly of family members. They differ if they have health concerns or not, if they are men or women, if they are well educated or not. They differ because the course of their life and their social roles have been very different. They have a different style of life. They differ according to these and other criteria but they are least different because of their different ages. Age may be an important factor with youngsters growing up, but not adults! It is time to free ourselves from these views and stereotypes about older people.

In addition, policies concerning older people are not free of these views and stereotypes and an educator of older adults should not reproduce them while developing or/and delivering an educational programme. This does not seem to be an easy task, since stereotypes about old age are often consolidated by older people themselves. *Consolidating stereotypes does not help in creating a new image of older people who are well engaged in community matters and contributing towards different policies*. Combating stereotypes can be an important task to be tackled by European projects concerning older people. Such projects should be ambitious, conceptual, accompanied by intensive public campaigning and possibly they should be intergenerational. Older people should not be applauded just because they have reached the age of eighty or more, and shall we say, use computers or because they try to live imitating

younger people. On the contrary, *they should be applauded for their contribution, for having achieved something valuable for themselves and the community.*

Government policies in some European countries concerning old age and ageing currently develop mostly in three directions:

- a permanent dialogue with those who have just retired and are aware of the type of old age they wish to live and old age as it is today for those who have been retired for some time;
- development of services in close collaboration with families and their neighbourhood;
- creation of opportunities for older people to be, on an equal basis with other generations, a part of the community.

Most problems arise within this last area. Why? Because older people are predominately regarded as being dependent and in need of help from others. Local, national and European policies often develop in the same way, with a great deal of consulting of NGOs, which are not themselves freed of reproducing social stereotypes about inactive and dependent old age. Consequently, *many older citizens start seeing their imposed dependence as a right or, even worse, as an advantage.*

II. How to start and organise an educational provision for older people?

As people age, they participate less and less in older adult education. This is due not only to their individual learning habits, but also to the lack of learning opportunities in different regions, localities and residential areas. In districts where live older people with lower standard of living, with lower educational and/or migration backgrounds, where the number of educational structures is not sufficient participation in older adult education programmes is hindered. Older people's learning abilities, their attitude towards learning and learning possibilities in the locality as well as attitude of the social environment affect older people's readiness for learning (Peterson, David A: Facilitating Education for Older Learners).

Educational programmes for older people can be provided by *an array of providers*, their nature exerting an impact on the nature of educational programmes, values and motives underpinning such programmes. Hence, educational programmes can be provided by: universities and various faculties- mostly those engaged in social sciences or humanities, but also technical or natural sciences. They can be provided by museums, educational institutes or educational organisations, centres of social work, libraries, federations of associations, associations, etc. The educational programmes can be part of the regular activities of these organisations and institutions or they can be organised independently. Our experience tells us that NGOs run by older people for older people are more convenient than intergenerational or community centres for this matter. Namely it is important that older people own the organisation, are responsible for it and build their own social identity through it.

Slovenian Third Age University is an independent creation though initially it got inspired by the first third age university in Toulouse.

It started by researching older people's position in society and the development of the first educational programme on the basis of the analysis of older people's needs. Let us guide you through different steps leading to a new third age university.

You have decided to set up a new third age university in your country and your locality. It is going to be the first one in the vicinity. In that case, it is important that you keep in mind that is will turn to be not a local but a national institution, so from the very beginning it should be build and organised as such, as a future network of U3As.

The model of Slovenian U3A

This model started to be shaped with some modest milestones, upon finding an inspirational lesson in the manual of French language Intercodes. The lesson, the module was on older people and their activities, their position in society, the first U3A in Toulouse. There was a book on the psychology of ageing and there was some American literature or medical books discussing old age. It seemed like adult life ended much sooner than today. Older age was not dealt with. Older people's issues were simply not interesting and literature practically non-existent. Your situation will be easier and more complicated at the same time, since over the last three decades' numerous articles and books have been published on older people, old age, older adult education, psychology of old age. Start by reading, shall we say, the Journal of Education and Ageing. Ageing and Education, Consult the literature the authors quote and you will be led from one valuable source to another. Google the concepts like old age, older people, older citizens, later life, older adult education, education of older people, older people's learning (scholarly articles) and Amazon.com and your horizons will be broadened. Google also culture, culture of older people, leisure, etc.

Start by reading classical and psychological literature, psychology (Carl Rogers, Viktor Frankl, Carl Gustav Jung, Erich Fromm) and developmental psychology (Eric Ericson, Charlotte Bühler, etc.) literature dealing with old age and the relationships between older people and younger generations. Read history of older adult education and you will understand how the antidote towards older adult education has been growing.

Viewing artistic works through the lenses of both contemporary gerontological theory and postmodernist concepts, you can examine literary treatments, cinematic depictions (particularly films produced after the year 2000) and artistic portraits of ageing from Shakespeare to Hemingway, from Horton Foote to Disney, from Rembrandt to Alice Neale, while also comparing the attitudes toward aging in different literatures; from the literature in your country and your language towards world classics and world contemporary literature. Take care that you stick to normal and not pathological old age which is most often described. The examples demonstrate that long before gerontologists endorsed a Janus-faced model of ageing, artists were celebrating the diversity of older people, challenging the bio-medical equation of senescence with inevitable senility. Underlying all of this discussion is the firm conviction that cultural texts construct as well as encode the conventional perceptions of our

society; that literature, the arts, and the media not only mirror society's worries but can also help to create and enforce them. We remember our dwelling upon Balzac's Father Goriot (an illustration of emotional dependency of older people on their children to the point of self oblivion and even self-destruction, the Tolstoi's The Death of Ivan Illyich). We were attracted also by Paul Tournier Learn to Grow Old, or later Simone de Beauvoir's *The coming of Age*. We argue that not only literature but the humanities as a whole transmit multiple reflections on human life that have shaped our social concepts for good or ill.

Moreover, humanities continue to bear a vital relationship to situations experienced by individuals in almost any given culture. Since all societies contain multiple clashing ideologies, these aesthetic forms may also reflect the concepts of a residual culture or anticipate the tenets of an emerging one, often establishing a dialectical tension between these competing discourses.

It follows, therefore, that literature, the arts, and the media not only mirror society's conventions, but also create them. The humanities have contributed to the construction of stereotyped images of ageing in your society and the ways in which the humanities can be employed to deconstruct these images.

To go back to Slovenian Third Age University. We were knowledgeable about Canadian literature and some advantages we had were as follows:

- The university was established as an association, an NGO, which is a format freer than formats offered by tertiary education. Volunteering was possible, as was possible building older people's responsibility for their university, the selection of mentors was free;

- We were the first to introduce e*ducation of living.* Such education is non-formal education since only non-formal education can be kept close to people and their life. Slovenian Third Age University is less about the transmission of knowledge and more about constructing new knowledge together with older learners;

- We introduced small study groups up to 12 members to develop into primary social groups;

- Study circles and groups were immediately connected with local development and older learners work in social environment. This offered older people possibility to

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check their abilities and achievements in the eyes of the general public, in public space;

- Our education of older people was conceived as a way of living that's why we spend a lot of time outside the lecture rooms;
- When we started education of older people we also started research into it and public campaigning. Older adult education is about changing mentalities, therefore It cannot be limited to older people's education alone. Research and public campaigning are a basis for what would be called today "content marketing". But they are, of course much more.

Today we would start by setting up a web page in those days we started by national radio programmes.

The role of U3A's

According to Paul Lengrad, the author of the theory of lifelong education, the role of U3A is "creating bonds between the recent and the last, between the coming generations and the generations preceding them", "To transpose on younger and older people the thought of their ancestors, their feelings and their achievements; This is necessary to maintain the future for all of us. It is necessary to maintain the important achievement of human spirit (be they poetry, music, architecture, painting or works of philosophy."

Lessons from the past

Each of us have learned lessons, gathered negative and positive knowledge. We learned, for instance that posters were not effective, that radio was *the* medium of older people, even more than television. Exceptionally also Facebook. Today there are specialised web pages for older people, there are newsletters of other organisations, there are web pages of other organisations. Use them!

 Especially web pages of theatres, libraries, etc. At Slovenian U3A we have never stopped working with the media and we started created our archives of media documentation as soon as 1984.

Archives enable learners, researchers, ourselves to track the development of our activities, to understand the changing spirit of the time. They document old times. It is important to make steps, to advance, to run events and education but it is equally important to document them.

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Different legal documents, the Statute, By Laws etc. have been developed over time, changed quite often as well. In 1984, there was no funding possible. We had to rely on ourselves. Today, there are local, regional, national European funding possibilities. Today civil society has been recognised and has been shaped. This was not the case three decades ago. So, we had to be inventive as concerns funding as well.

We could go on and on describing our achievements and stumbling over the last decades. Our intention is to attract your attention to some selected points, just to help you avoiding some problems.

The first steps towards your own U3A

So, you have decided to step up a new U3A in your locality. You should know that this an important step. That you have just started a huge amount of learning, the process of changing the environment and yourself. What are you supposed to do first?

- **Talk about your idea with many people. They will give you a lot of suggestions.**

Analyse the needs. Find out if older people would like to get involved in education and what they are interested in. Your source could be older people with whom you are close, your family. You will be surprised how many ideas have your interlocutors. You can also distribute surveys in person or electronically. You might create a Facebook page to gather ideas.

- **Institutional analysis. Refer to similar institutions or referential institutions**.

They have a lot of knowledge you can profit from. You might even join forces later on.

- **Observe what is going on around you**

Theatre performances, films, articles in national and local newspapers, TV programmes, radio programmes magazines especially those specialized in older people, Internet, YouTube, Daily Motion, University de tous les savoirs, TED lectures, Statistical data, national and European (EUROSTAT) where old age is being depicted and analysed.

- **Follow the developments of the problematics of older people in different areas.** The more knowledge you get, the better is your contact with older people, the more efficient we are. Let us get knowledge about adult and older adult education, general theses as to be able to introduce U3A and its mission in public.

- **Take part in various educational events**

Search for Internet sources access, education of older people, education in later life, the third age, the fourth age, Wikipedia.

Establishing the Board of your future U3A

Invite those who are ready to work with you, those who are professionals and those who are well connected in your locality. Distribute the tasks among the member of the Board. Do not try to do all the work alone. It will not be effective nor appreciated.

- **Introducing the fees**

The membership fees will be your very first financial source. They have to be settled by everybody even Board members.

The Founding General Assembly

To the founding general assembly invite a lecturer or lecturers who are knowledgeable in the field and understand the phenomenon of older adults' learning. Invite representatives of local authorities and government, invite the mayor. Prepare a quality cultural programme. Invite local journalists. The association you have just created is not for profit, therefore there is no need to pay articles. Your association does not need publicity, you are not selling anything! You are trying to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants in your locality. For this first meeting prepare forms to be filled in and to enrol into educational programmes. Prepare a survey questionnaire on possible contents of education.

Get premises to hire. In small localities, you are to find it in public institutions, at the municipality, a school, civic centre, library.

Find the first mentors and ask them to introduce their programme. Take care that these first mentors be extremely good and experts, of different ages, if possible.

Start with up to four study circles, no more! Going step by step is a rule at U3A.

Set up a documentation centre/archives

Determine which documents and how you will file them and what you will file electronically as well. Use the established methods of quoting sources. Example: Novak, P. Towards a new U3A. In: Delo, 28 November 2017, Volume 15. p. 15.

You are going to archive **legal documents,** i.e. Statute, By-Laws, Minutes of the Board Meetings. Be careful about the conclusions of the meetings. You are to follow the conclusions therefore minutes are necessary.

In a special file (also electronic one) file legal documents, laws texts, and minutes concerning changes. You never know when they will be needed.

- **Photo documentation**

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Set up your own photo documentation (also electronic one). What, when, who in in the picture, who took the photo.

- **Documenting newspaper clips**

Collect them and state the source. i.e. Lešnik, L: They like learning. In: Delo, Volume 15. P. 20

- **Sound / image documents**

Ask the journalists to send you a copy, a CD or a DVD of the programme. If that is not possible, make a recording on your own and file it. Join the filled in form:

Radio:
Programme:
Title of the programme:
Journalist:
Date:/time
Description of the contents
Participants:

- **Library**

Start setting up your own library, electronically.

- **Web page, electronic address**

Setting up a simple web page in word press programme is not a difficult task. Structuring it according to your needs demands some reflection, but there are so many example you can look up to. As long as you do not have a web page and a logo, as long as you have not determined the colours and the fonts of your visual presentation, you do not exist no matter how good you are.

- **Slogan/logo**

Slovenian Third Age University based itself on the results of some studies and set up the logo: *We broaden horizons, we unite people.* Use the slogan as often as possible, even your letter paper or electronic letters. In this way you will brand your organisation.

 A network of currently 52 members, Slovenian Third Age University is a rich story of educating older people and educating about older people, stimulating older people's culture. It is a story of research, development, advocacy, volunteering, counseling and guidance for active ageing, cooperation with other generations for increased social fairness and cohesion.
33 years of Slovenian Third Age University

Subscribe to different referential web pages and Newsletters (EPALE, AGE Platform Europe, FORAGE Eurydice, etc.). All older learners should appear in public as often as possible.

Third age universities become an independent social subject in local environment.

The best form of older adult education is association run by older experts. They form study groups and make a present of their voluntary work. Later new work stations or places are created. In local environment third age universities take up other tasks: training tourist guides, exploring cultural heritage, babysitting. Independent universities become an independent social subject. Older people get a place to meet, to perform, to study. There are infinite possibilities for creative work for older people, it their work is asked for and appreciated. Older people do not want jobs, but work. With their work, they create new work. Each generation has its own role in society. What we need are more numerous and better interconnections.

- **Mission statement**

Each organisation has to lay down basic principles and values according to which it will function and develop.

In our view, culture and older adult education are a way of decent and contributing living, meeting individual and community needs as well as anticipating social changes and adapting to them. It is also a way towards achieving greater social fairness on distributive, cultural and symbolic level. It is about supporting social inclusion and participation as well as dialogue among generations. Older adult education fosters active citizenship and respect for environment. It is a way towards maintaining and developing older people's knowledge and skills, helping them to use them for their own benefit as well as for the benefit of society and in cooperation with other generations.

With regard to what has been said above, we, students, employees and voluntary collaborators of Slovenian Third Age University are aware that the third age is the time when an older person can devote more intensively to other people, education, personal and social development.

We are to participate in Slovenian Third Age University, and we are to act so that Slovenian Third Age University will continue reinforcing the idea of humanised education, positive consideration of old age and ageing, as well as fostering human relationships among older people themselves and with other generations.

We owe our right to learn, to be active, creative, contributing and to socialize to all those who contributed to setting up and developing Slovenian Third Age University and to ourselves.

We give back our due by respecting the Mission statement of Slovenian Third Age university, through collaborating at running and organizing the education, through voluntary work at the university, through our personal growth and our professional development as well as through transferring our knowledge and skills on others.

We, students and voluntary collaborators, are aware that this university can be and can remain as it is on condition that it continues to be meant for each single man or woman, regardless of his or her national, political, educational or religious background.

III. The educational process

Any educational process in older adult education starts with the process of programming. Older students do not accept being taught top down, being taught about a topic without reference to their own life and experience without reference to actual life and events around them. Therefore, the most important task of older adult educators is to develop a programme to understand how it goes, we suggest your turned to the process model by Malcolm Knowles.

About the designing a programme in older adult education?

There are theories underpinning planning and programming adult education programmes. There are assumptions and concepts of learning that may help construct an educational programme for adults. Planning and programming are necessary in order to achieve the coherence of programme elements. In the past, the main planning and programming strategy was goal oriented. Later there was a search for equilibrium between different individual ad community needs. One of the most applied planning and programming models in Slovenia is Malcolm Knowles's Andragogical cycle. Because it is a cycle it can be and it is repeated and in fact it is not necessary to follow its phases step by step. Focus is on analyzing needs and on the process of education.

Programming older adult education is therefore not for transmitting and reproducing wrapped up knowledge. On the contrary, programming should dwell upon older people's issues, knowledge, skills and sources of knowledge they can contribute before and during the delivery of the programme.

Therefore, programming in older adult education is of extreme importance and probably the most difficult and creative task in older adult education, (which is by no means mere provision of educational programmes). On the contrary, it is about constant creating opportunities for learning within preferably small learning groups.

Steadily such groups become primary social groups: the kind of groups where members (mentor included) can get informational, emotional as well as material help. The kind of groups where students know each other and trust each other.

What should developers of older adult education programmes bear in mind!

In most Western European countries, old age did not emerge as a political and social issue until the 1950s. After the Second World War, Europe was mainly interested in repairing the

damage and looking towards the future focusing on the younger generations, often forgetting about older people. Older people were portrayed by social stereotypes as passive not interested in any kind of participation in society.

In the P3AE project and training, on the contrary, we are interested in the current European attitudes towards older people and new European approaches towards participation of senior citizens in community life and education associated with it.

An active senior citizen has knowledge about older people and old age in society. He or she is aware that older people are not all the same, as actually they are all different, much more different than the members within the younger generations and therefore he or she stands for the right to be different in later life, to have his or her own style of life, to be differently treated by policies, etc. Not all older people are patients and their ageing is not necessarily pathological, but rather normal, not all older people are poor, not all older people are helpless or functionally illiterate. An active senior citizen therefore stands up against the discourse of weakness and dependence adopted in most policies, by the media, public statements and other texts about people in later life. Moreover, not all older people are grandmothers and grandfathers, as they can have different social roles. Programme developers and teachers need to bear in mind what has been said above.

The role of an adult educator in the implementation of an older adult education programme

Adult educators are being required to implement the educational programme and create learning situations in tune with the learners' needs, wishes, aspirations as well as expectations, the groups of learners being ever more diversified and individual learners ever more self-directed. But adult educators are also required to adapt the methods to the learning situations as well as the epistemological status of different kinds of knowledge (Charlot, 1977).

More learner-focused methods, new methods, and a combination of different learning locations and learning methods have been gaining importance.

Adult educators should be trained to use dialogue and discussion as the royal methods in adult education, as well as other methods enabling *reciprocal* and *mutual learning*. Dialogue and discussion make it possible for adult educators to adapt themselves to learners, thus getting aware of both how the learners learn and what they learn. The educators on the other hand learn to what extent their work has been a valuable investment and also how much they

themselves have learned from their learners. Learners' searching and their attempts to understand are a good source for educators to learn.

Adult educators should have a critical attitude towards themselves, taking into account their field experience and the results of their observation.

Adult educators should act as learners. According to Knowles (1990, p.43) each adult learner in their speciality know what adult educators do not know. Therefore, adult learning should be and actually is *peer learning.*

Lindeman (1926) argues that one of the major differences between traditional education and education of adults is in the process of learning. Managing such this specific process is a basic competence adult educators should have.

Adult learners *are not aware of the knowledge they hav*e. They know without knowing, though hidden knowledge does influence their opinion. It has become part of their representations. Adult educators' task and competence is to clarify whether the adult learner's knowledge is valid, or less valid or not valid at all. An adult educator critically helps the adult student to put order into his or her representations. Questions are being put and knowledge is being questioned against the background of what the learners have learned informally through life phenomena and events. Consequently, an adult learner determines the direction of his or her learning. When adult learner's knowledge has been identified, it is up to the adult educator to confront it with scientific theoretical knowledge, elements of knowledge that have to be acquired. *The adult educator has to be a guide, a guarantee that the learners' thinking and learning direction are the right ones.*

Methods

Most of the times older adult education is thought of mostly in terms of methods. But methods are by no means just simple techniques and simple procedures to follow. They are carefully selected and sequenced taking into account many different aspects of older adult education, the psychological profile of the study group being an important one. Now, what impacts the choice of methods in older adult education?

- Objectives and contents
- Characteristics of the learning group
- Mentors' beliefs about teaching

Brockett (2015) catrgorised the teaching methods as follows:

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Methods for learning the contents (lectures, panels etc.)

Methods for learning skills (demonstration, simulation, dramatisation)

Methods for developing standpoints and values are meant for personal growth , learning about oneself, understanding the world

Group and experiential methods are the best for older learners: discussion, problem learning, case study, project work, etc.

Case study: conducting a research as a learning method in the study group Squares, streets and buildings around us

Conducting a research and writing a research report are in themselves learning methods for those who are involved. It has been widely admitted that research reports do not set out to simply report, they seek to persuade. Research groups are thus supposed to create a research report asking themselves the following crucial questions: (1) What is it that we want to say? (2) To whom do we wish to say it (the 'target group') and (3) Why do we want to say it?

In some cases, it takes the older students' research group some time to understand the aims of the research: they are not supposed to develop an official type of guide or an architect's or urbanism's or an art historian's perspective on the town- though keeping an intellectual distance is welcome. Our older students understood that a town was also what they felt about it, a town were stories of our lives lived there, a town were people they related to. They all shaped them and sustained them through their writing some research groups clearly wanted to communicate something of the feeling of the place and the relationships.

In most cases the research project is discussed (method of discussion). Mostly a greater number of research topics are suggested and then their number is downsized.

A town is where people work, love and die (Albert Camus, The Plague). Therefore, *respondent interviewing, informant interviewing, life histories, biographical learning* are methods used to approach the on-going relationship between the inhabitants and the town.

As we have said the methods used are *discussion but also public consultation and interviewing citizens.*

The method is also a descriptive one (description). Members of the research groups for instance describe food and wine they "meet" on their way. And also, people they meet.

In other research groups there are mostly stories, descriptions- very personal ones- of *where members of the group are or were in a habit of going and what they see on their way (descriptive method).* But their descriptions require researchers to go to libraries, archives, searching for primary and secondary sources, documents, illustrations, maps, books, to help them for instance to research the history of the names of the places *(document analysis),* etc.

They are *browsing through Internet* for data and pictures. They consult texts and pictures in Internet comparing those from the ancient times with the new ones *(comparative method).*

In some cases, the research method of choice is involving an older person walking through the town and a younger person asking him or her questions *(interview).* In such cases the method would be dwelling on the theory of life span following a person through the stages of his or her life *(life history)* and the town.

To summarize, the prevailing methods are: descriptive method, comparative method, document analysis, respondent interviewing, informant interviewing, life history, biographical learning.

Study circles and psychosocial dynamics in small study groups

Older adult education is quality education in small study groups. Our first model were *Swedish study circles* started at the beginning of the 19th century as a social movement leading rural Swedish society towards industrialisation. In Swedish study circles, there were no mentors. Groups were led by animators, one of the members Our wish in Slovenia, was to have democratic relationships in study circles. Therefore, we introduced the two roles: the role of mentor and the role of animator.

"Mentor is the spirit of the study circles, animator its soul and heart" we are in habit to say. Students more easily discuss various matters with animators who also channel their ideas towards goals and helps carrying out certain activities (study trips, financial matters, cultural programme). Study circles are composed of from 9 to 15 members. Mentors are professionals who draft the learning targets and set up a programme. But the programme is flexible, and gets modified at the beginning of the study year and during the study year. Mentors take care of what and how students learn, each student. Study circles meet once or twice a week from 1,5 up to 3 hours. Between study meetings students perform different study activities. They attend exhibitions observe natural phenomena, go to a cinema performance, etc. They watch TV discuss new information with friends and family. The non- formal education completes the formal, structured education and together they become an uninterrupted flow. A study circle is an entity composed of the mentors, animator and study circle members, i.e., students. Each community has its its own characteristics and so have study circles. Group cohesion is above average. If it is strong, the group may open up to new members Group members have difficulties accepting intervention form the educational institution. They are most cooperative among themselves and the mentor.

When a group is formed, it has a tendency to last from five up two twenty-five years. There is always a lot to be learned. In study circles, relationships are democratic and confidential. Mentors take into 'account the groups proposals. "You know we did like the topic of symbiotic relationships, but the topic of boredom, no we did not like it". A study circle is also a volunteering circle offering emotional, informational, material help to its members.

The aims of the study circle

To quench the thirst for knowledge or to intensify it, to motivate even more the students for learning- To help them to make a connection between knowledge and life, to show them

possibilities in the local environment. Animators search for connections with different institutions. This is how came into being a new local library (*Marinkina knjižnica),* It has been set up and is run by older students themselves. Students of psychology got involved in additional studies of dyslexia and started helping young students with specific learning difficulties in schools.

Education is not just education. Therefore, study circles have twofold targets: cognitive and activity targets. In study circles some students get enough knowledge to start a new career. Some become painters, some cultural mediators in museums, some are filmmakers, some work in NGOs, hospitals theatres, kindergartens, botanical gardens, etc.

Study circles have a strong impact on older students that can bee seen in all areas of their life. Older people who resist social stereotypes about old age are more satisfied with their life and are easier to live with.

Mentors and mentoring

It has been mentioned several times that adult education is to be responsive to both individual and social changes (Findeisen, 2004). Thus, one of the basic competencies in adult education *is adapting to changing circumstances.*

Over the last thirty years the older *learner audiences* have changed due to social developments and the advent of information society. In addition, sources of knowledge have been multiplied and older adult audiences have become more informed. Older adult audiences got access to education.

Understanding older adult learners and audiences is thus one of the basic competencies an educator/mentor acquires and improves whenever confronted with older learners.[2]

Educators/mentors are being required to create learning situations in tune with the learners' needs, wishes, aspirations as well as expectations, the groups of learners being ever more diversified and individual older learners ever more self-directed. But educators/mentors are also required to adapt the methods to the learning situations as well as the epistemological status of different kinds of knowledge (Charlot, 1977).

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[2] Being involved in older adult education means understanding older learners' past, present and future and the need to create social ties.

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Educators/mentors should act as learners. According to Knowles (1990, p.43) each (older) adult learner in their speciality know what educators/mentors do not know. Therefore, adult learning should be in actually peer learning.

It has been mentioned above that older adult learners *are not aware of the knowledge they hav*e. They know without knowing, though hidden knowledge does influence their opinion. It has become part of their representations. Educators/mentors' task and competence in older adult education is to clarify whether the older adult learner's knowledge is valid, or less valid or not valid at all. An educator/mentor critically helps the older adult student to put order into his or her representations. Questions are being put and knowledge is being questioned against the background of what the learners have learned informally through life phenomena and events. Consequently, an older adult learner determines the direction of his or her learning. When older adult learner's knowledge has been identified, it is up to the educator/mentor to confront it with scientific theoretical knowledge, elements of knowledge that have to be acquired. *The educator/, mentor has to be a guide, a guarantee that the learners' thinking and learning direction are the right ones.*

A good specialist is not necessarily a good mentor

A good *mentor should get rid of social stereotype* about older people: that they are slow learners, bad learners, that they get involved in education only to socialise. Mentors' attitudes are extremely important. Each mentor should ask himself: "Is it enough that I know that my students will know as well?". The mentors' knowledge is not enough. A good mentor should focus on his or her students. If a mentor values his or her professional knowledge or even use it as a defence mechanism, he or she can not see his or her students. Good mentors should have some personal qualities like *to be self-confident*, *to trust people, to believe in their successful learning.* He or she likes being with people, has the ability to adapt, has empathy, can live in other people's feelings, can listen to them and accept the students' differences. *Mentors never know enough. They continue learning all the time.*

In lifelong learning the two functions, mentor and learner, are exchangeable. Each-one-teach-one is a basic principle and mentors can be learners and vice versa. These functions and roles are always temporary and they accompany other social roles people take on. Today mentoring is a frequent, if not the most frequent format of education. When we have a need to know we immediately think about who could be our mentor. Most of the times a mentor is the only

source of knowledge. And learners' mentees add from time to time other sources. For good mentoring, some starting condition are to be fulfilled. Mentor and mentee have to have an affinity, have to be attractive to each other.

They have to trust each other, and have an open communication. Mentor has to believe that the mentee is capable and has to be convinced that learning will be successful. The mentee has to feel safe with a mentor at his side and has to trust him.

A mentor has to come closer to the mentee, get to know him, so that he might discover in him the undiscovered talents needed for a given knowledge to be acquired. A mentor's task is to free mentee's potentials.

Mentor and mentee should be sensitive to the needs of each other. The freedom to express oneself, the mentee's gaining knowledge with the mentor's help and mentor's corrections, the limits set by the mentor are a great assist.

Mentoring as tandem learning

Mentor's role is to combine the different sources of knowledge and help the mentee to find new ones on his own. Mentor carefully monitors the mentee's advancement, and determines new tasks for him. Learning with a mentor is safe. Mentor's encouragement arrives at the right moment, since mentors continuously live in their mentees- the Network of Slovenian Third Age Universities has more than 2000 mentors mentoring study circles. Study circles are not about teaching but about common discovering new knowledge.

Phases of the mentoring relationship

Mentoring is a relationship that lasts. From the initial cooperation, it can grow into real friendship when a person does not need being mentored anymore. Students identify with their mentor, they imitate him or her, follow him or her to get knowledge - in the very first phase the relationship with the mentor is symbiotic. Learners for instance paint as their mentor does. Later a new phase in the mentoring relationship takes place. The learner, the mentee finds out that he or she prefers other colours and styles of painting. smaller over bigger canvases, his or her own motives. Step by step the mentee gets their own expression. A mentor should not be disturbed by this fact, and finally the mentor and the mentee meet as equals. Their previous interpersonal respect helps them to acknowledge their equality (Krajnc,1979).

Mentors in older adult education should have a variety of characteristics: humanist values, trusting their students, the ability to listen, to accept the diversity, to smoothen relationships,

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to offer help and counsel, professionalism, empathy and understanding the other, adaptability, reliability, responsibility, readiness to share knowledge, goal orientation, the ability to solve conflicts.

Educators/mentors' competencies

In their work with older learners they should:

1. act professionally, respecting professional heritage and tradition. They should be critical interpreters of knowledge and various cultures, educators/mentors should create a link between their own culture and their learners' culture;

2. be themselves engaged in permanent learning; if lack disciplinary knowledge they are not in a position to help learners establish links between pieces of knowledge;

3. have the ability to use information from different sources;

4. communicate clearly. Oral or written language they use within an array of professional and teaching contexts should be correct without mistakes and effective. They should listen to others, correctly interpret messages from others and respond appropriately; ask questions to clarify, and exhibit interest in having two-way communication;

   They should demonstrate openness in sharing information and keeping learners informed;

5. be able to devise learning situations for adult learners to learn the contents and develop the targeted competencies;

6. monitor teaching/learning situations from the point of view of the contents to be learned by the learners as well as competencies targeted by the educational programme;

7. be able to evaluate the progression of learning and the acquisition of competencies targeted by the programme;

8. plan, organise and supervise the group processes as to enable their learning and socialisation; use methods and time efficiently;

9. adapt their interventions according to the tacit knowledge of learners and their (specific) characteristics;

10. integrate new technologies into different phases (preparation, monitoring, managing education and professional development);

11. cooperate with the team of educators/mentors and staff being

respectful of the mission of their institution. They should work collaboratively with colleagues to achieve organizational goals; they should solicit input by genuinely valuing other ideas and expertise; they should be willing to learn from others and place team agenda before personal agenda; take part in processes of individual and collective development;

12. display an ethical attitude within their professional situations.

Animators

Each study group has, apart from mentors, an animator. As the name says his or her main responsibility is to animate, inspire or enliven learning in the study circle. The animator should be strongly motivated for learning, he or she supports the mentor and should inspire his colleagues in the groups.

He or she works as a volunteer, assisting the mentor by taking over some organisational tasks, keeps records for the study group and helps organising complementary activities. He has an important social role. If the mentor is the spirit, the brain of the groups the animator should act as its soul and heart has been mentioned above.

Animators are an invisible, but very important network of volunteers, supporting the organisation and fostering the development of the self-help practices. They pass on the information conveyed by the administrative headquarters of the university and they inform the study groups about important events to come. By sending our messages to its 320 animators, the Ljubljana's Third Age University head office reaches in a more personal way 3500 students.

Animators liaise with the mentor and the headquarters of the organisation. The communication runs in both directions by e-mail, phone, face-to-face meetings.

Animators react and/or consult if there are problems in the group. They draft new proposals. Report on the study process and outside activities. They help resolve potential conflicts. They are the mentor's and students' trustees. It is easier for group members to communicate their problems to animators than directly to mentors.

Evaluation

There is no education without evaluation, and assessing learning attainments. Older adult education is no exception here. Though in practice we have noticed that mentors have a

tendency to skip this phase of education. They do not want to get negative feedback in a study group they go on well with. Second, mentors as well have in mind the school type of evaluation.

School type of evaluation would not be appropriate in older adult education, but the right forms of evaluation will be a source of many positive feelings, and will be a pleasant experience in the educational process.

If a mentor announces evaluation in older adult education this causes fear in his or her students. It is interesting to find out that adults reject what they should like to know: how much they have learned and how well.

Our research studies and practice have shown that older students are extremely sensitive to personal relationships, rejecting any kind of superior behaviour to them.

If the assessment and evaluation take on a more "grown up" form older people, older students discover that they like it. New knowledge is new source of motivation for learning - older students normally get enthusiastic about appropriate evolution procedures.

Older adult education is not about class teaching, but it dwells on the andragogic cycle. In addition, evaluation is a part of this cycle in addition to the needs analysis, content programming, implementation of the programme- It is important that evaluation will not be skipped.

What is the role of evaluation? It helps education to be more flexible, updated, bringing the necessary feedback and information on how much effort has to be put into learning and to know what we want to know. It betters education, adapting to the group and is an orientation for the mentor as concerns learning possibilities.

What to remember?

There is no education without evaluation.
Mentor should help students not to be afraid of the evaluation interventions.
Evaluation mostly helps students.
One's advancement is a source of motivation for further learning.
Mentors need feedback for their further work, and mentors learn what they have learned from their students.
Non-knowledge is not interesting, on the contrary evaluation should reveal what students know.
Initial evaluation or diagnostic evaluation should help setting learning goals.
Continuing evaluation should help change the programme and make the educational process flexible.
Final evolution of the knowledge acquired shows where it can be used.
Final evaluation shows which goals have been attained and what is left for the future.

In older adult education scores are not used.
Knowledge is not meant for the sake of knowledge; therefore, the attainment of cognitive and activity goals should take place.
Assessment should be written or oral as well as descriptive.
Self evaluation is an important part of the educational process.
Evaluated are both the mentor and students.

Evaluation learning attainments is a continuous process starting at the beginning of the educational process. Mentor can easily see that some students adopt a quicker pace than others. Also some are inhibited and some hesitate. If mentors do not find out the differences in their students, some students will not profit a lot from education. Continuous evaluation helps students and mentor to overcome barriers.

In study circles relationships are democratic and should be such also in the phase of the evaluation. Democratic relationships help rearrange the programme and methods.

Human beings are a compilation and result of their experiences. They get piled up through tour life. Older people are most diverse, much more than young people due to this fact. Some students will prefer scientific data, and would less appreciate personal examples. Acquiring knowledge is a psychological process much related to ego states of the learner and mentor. Mentors cannot work with more than four study circles.

Because psychologically they are exhausting. Class teaching is a model of socialisation, the same for all children. Education of adults is individualised directed towards each student (Engl. learner focused education).

Final evaluation as all evaluation interventions indeed should be a pleasant experience before a study circles stops working and goes on holidays. What they have learned students know better than anyone. Mentors only provide the starting questions:

What has been important for you, what have you learned so far?
Which piece of knowledge have you already used and where?
If you compare this study year with the previous one. Tell me how much you have learned: a lot, rather a lot, not that much, little.
Mentors are not interested in getting an objective picture of the knowledge gained. *Students will describe what knowledge means to them, and this is alright.*

Forms of evaluation

Mentors should say what they have noticed and should voice their opinion in front of the study group. As concerns programme contents, learning objectives, the process of learning and the use of knowledge. On what has been achieved.

There are several forms of evaluation in older adult education:

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Mentor describes the advancements of individual students / group.

Students' self-assessment.

Group discussion about learning in study circles.

Assessment of students' outputs.

Assessment in pairs.

Mentors tell what each student will still have to learn.

All forms of assessment are flexibly combined depending on the climate in the group. *If a group refuses some type of evaluation it should not be forced to accept it.*

Both objectives are important: knowledge and activity objectives.

Knowledge

What have students learned?
Have we attained the learning objective we set up at the beginning of the year?
Have single students learned what they wanted at the beginning?
Am I satisfied with what my students have learned?
Hass human capital ben increased? (the more we know, the more we are valued)

Activity goal

Knowledge, developed standpoints.
Common proposal for the use of knowledge.
Where individual students will use their knowledge.
Increasing social capital (wider circle of people students knows, better relationships).

Older adult education supports active ageing

In school learning attainments are needed for further learning.

In adult education, the learning attainments should be felt in everyday life and practice.

Why do older students learn?

- Not to be socially excluded.

- To remain included.

- To gain new social status after retirement.

- New knowledge supports acquiring knowledge for new activities.

- Without new knowledge, older people would become a burden to younger generations.

- ICT skills learning and language education support general abilities. That's why they are getting ever more popular.

Andragogic theories teach us that the only real evaluation is in real life use, in changed attitudes and standpoint, values. It is not enough to gain knowledge it has to be applied.

Acquired knowledge and skills are best evaluated when used in real life situations.

IV. Policies about active ageing and other policies concerning old age and older citizens on local, regional, national, European and global level

Global level

In the past in most EU countries policies did not deal with older people's higher and secondary needs like learning, belonging, having esteem for others and being respected, relating to others, etc. They were not interested in their learning to know, learning to do, learning to live with others. They were, most of the times, focused on pension and retirement age, social protection measures and health.

There were no policies on education of older people, no policies on older people's *(serious) leisure tim*e, for instance. In this perspective, *serious leisure* constitutes systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity sufficiently substantial and interesting in nature and requiring special skills, knowledge, and experience. Most of the times leisure time policies, if they existed, concentrated on *casual leisure*, like passive watching television, meeting one's groups of friends over a cup of coffee, playing cards. Serious leisure means that older people have activities constructing and changing both themselves and community. They should be ambitious, intellectually stimulating and supporting local community as possible.

For instance, learning transactional analysis in order to set up a society of adoptive grandparents and in order to understand children and care for them. Or, i.e. learning to become an assistant custodian in a museum, etc.

Now, being involved in education and organised learning is one way to age actively. So, what is active ageing all about? Active ageing is defined in different ways. In 2012 Lazslo Andor, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, 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 possible when one is surrounded and is in a position to give and receive, being related to other generations and one's peers (open social networks). One can age actively when one's values are appreciated in society. Anyway, there are two levels of ageing actively: a personal one and a community or a social one. They have to be interlaced. But wanting to age actively, one has to overcome stereotypes, prejudices, discrimination and one has to reposition oneself in our changing society. As we

view it, however, active ageing is an alternative way of being in later life and it means that an older person retains some of his or her social roles and takes on new ones which are more adapted to the nature of the postmodern and knowledge based society.

Active ageing was officially defined in several ways by different international organizations: OECD, European Commission and finally World Health Organization. Most applicable from our point of view, seems to be the definition of active ageing as it was formulated by World Health Organization.

The role of educators of older adults is to help their students to understand their own attitude towards ageing, to improve their understanding of active ageing, to reposition themselves in society which is a must for all generations in a transforming society. They should also help older students to understand the importance of education as concerns active ageing.

Active ageing may be quite different for different older people. Therefore, educators should invite older students to discuss first what *ideal old age would look be like in their eyes*, if there were no constraints. At this stage, the educator does not need to make any comments but he or she intervenes inviting personally the participants who are reluctant to take the floor to join in.

The educators start by presenting the different definitions of active ageing stressing the advantage of the definition formulated by WHO over the others. While defining active ageing, <u>OECD</u> is mostly interested in the economic aspects of working longer, higher retirement age, intergenerational solidarity which has changed over the last decades. In the past, in the stable industrial times intergenerational solidarity contract established by Bismarck meant that younger people worked for older people. Now older people are supposed to work longer for younger people and themselves. There will be less young people and older people's contribution will therefore become decisive.

<u>European Commission</u> in its definition of active ageing is interested in the impact of active ageing on society.

<u>WHO,</u> however, focuses on the life course approach to active ageing, on both individual and social level of the process? It details the determinants of active ageing (health, emotional, civic and community, technological, etc.) meeting older people's needs and abilities. The educator also stresses that may be some other determinants are missing and invites the participants to suggest them. For instance, the most important component dimension of

active and quality ageing is generativity (Erikson), being related to others and having a sense of living, the feeling of being useful.

In EU countries, there are policies related to older people pertaining to different areas of life: social protection, health, education, culture, etc. There are policies more or less effective and implemented on local, regional, national, European or global level.

Recalling the statement of the UN System Task Team's report on population dynamics: "A post-2015 development agenda should account for a progressively and rapidly ageing world by promoting healthy ageing and economic well-being in old age, and by providing enabling and supportive environments where older people are integrated into the development process as an asset rather than a burden". We reiterate our concern that there is still a lack of a consistent, strong and positive narrative on global population ageing.

The effect of rapid population ageing across the world is that we are entering into the era of the 'age bulge', where by 2030 there will be more people over 60 than children under 10. By 2050, there will be 2 billion older people in the planet, the majority of whom will be women - current figures show that there are 84 men for every 100 women over the age of 605 - and older people will be living in developing countries. This is why we must ensure that the voices of older women and men are heard and their participation facilitated in the development of the post 2015 framework. We support Beyond 2015's call for *a* single universal development framework which takes into account poverty eradication, environmental sustainability, inequality, human rights and global responsibility. Older people are contributors to sustainable development and poverty eradication. Lifetime inequalities of income, education, employment, health, disability and gender are likely to increase with age and must be recognized. Discrimination on the basis of age is still widespread in all regions of the world. Therefore, to ensure that the post-2015 development framework truly 'leaves no one behind', is inclusive of older people along with others and addresses the rights and needs of people of all ages, we insist that population dynamics, including global population ageing, must be taken into account across all goals, targets and indicators for the post-2015. We would like to go on by saying that a significant number of European citizens, be they young, middle aged or older, seem to have not quite a sufficient understanding of the mission and functions of the European Union, its institutions, as well as an incomplete knowledge of the gradual building of Europe.

This might be due to the fact that the "EU is an enterprise that was launched by closed circles and was constructed with little participation by European citizens" and that "the unification process indeed has until now been promoted mostly by the political elites" (Jacques Delors, Les Controverses du programme, 26th June 2009, France Culture).

In spite of this, Europe is believed to be "a wonderfully successful and globally admired project, though too often it is regarded merely as a project and rarely as an outcome" (Marcel Gauchet, idem), although in fact the results and outcomes are many, just as the aims of the European Union are manifold. It is with this understanding that this *Guide for educators engaged in older adult education* is designed to make readers, and particularly older European citizens, familiar with how and what has been achieved within EU, and what the results and outcomes have been, primarily in the areas that directly concern them.

European Treaties and Strategies

Treaties are the primary source of European law and they are also the legal basis for common policies. All policies relating to older people are thus dependent on the treaties, these being instruments of progressing European integration. Below is a summary of the most important treaties related to the issues of older people in the EU's history:

The Treaty of Lisbon also made the Union's human rights charter, the Charter of Fundamental Rights, legally binding. The Lisbon Strategy is, apart from the treaties, also a highly important concept in connection with the objectives and aims of the P3AE project. Due to its importance, it needs to be considered by senior citizens. The strategy was set out by the European Council in Lisbon in 2000 and is also known as the Lisbon Agenda or Lisbon Process.

It is an action and development plan for the EU, important for all social groups, older citizens included.

Its aim is to make the EU "the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world (which has not happened) capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, and with respect for the environment".

The NGO level

AGE (www.age-platform.org), the European Older People's Platform, is a European network of around 150 organizations 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

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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 organizations 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 specialize 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/

- 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

- FAFCE (F.deration der Katholischen Familienverbande in Europa):

http://www.family-eu.org/cms/index.php

• IPSE (Institut de la Protection Sociale Europenne) :

http://www.idies.org/index.php?post/Linstitut-de-la-protection-sociale-europeenne-IPSE

• 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.

There are currently a number of key demographic changes to consider, such as the shrinking total European population, processes affecting migration and, above all, demographic ageing. When talking about ageing we often have individual ageing in mind, and not the ageing of our societies and of the population. The ageing of the population, or demographic ageing, is however an achievement.

The European Union and its Relevance for Senior Citizens

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

There are many issues with respect to older people:

- working longer under better conditions
- preparing for volunteering whilst still in paid employment
- working as a volunteer on an individual basis or in an organized way within public institutions and other organizations during retirement
- having a different position within families
- taking part in lifelong learning and education
- participating in local communities
- participating in taking decisions in municipality matters such as education, health, culture, transport, social protection, alleviating poverty, etc.

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All these issues plus others are important to older people and not just matters such as pension schemes and pension reforms that are reported so often. Therefore, understanding the European Union, as well as how and why it has been integrating, will provide a better grasp of how its institutions and advisory bodies function for your benefit. Moreover, you will then understand better which non-governmental organizations operate at the European level for your benefit and how you, as senior citizens, can participate in shaping EU policies concerning your own and other generations.

Above all, you may develop an idea of how you can contribute to the reality of the European Union. Together we can make Europe a better place to live!

http://ec.europa.eu (European Commission)

http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives (Eurobarometer)

http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice (Commission's website for citizens to express themselves)

http://eesc.europa.eu/index_en.asp (EESC - Economic and Social Committee)

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu (EUROSTAT – centre for European statistics Union Documents)

http://eurageurope.org/eurag/ (EURAG - European Federation of Older Persons)

http://europa.eu/documentation (European Union Documents)

www.age-platform.org/ (AGE - European Older People's Platform)

www.careforeurope.org/ (Care - Christian Action Research & Education for Europe)

www.caritas-europa.org (Caritas Europa)

www.ccre.org/ (CCRE - Council of European Municipalities and Regions)

www.cecop.coop (CECOP - European Confederation of Workers' Cooperatives, Social Cooperatives and Social and Participative Enterprises)

www.cev.be/ (CEV - European Volunteer Centre)

www.coface-eu.org (COFACE - Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union)

www.coface-eu.org/ (COFACE - Conf.d.ration des Organisations Familiales de l'Union Europ.enne)

www.consilium.europa.eu (Council of European Union)

www.eapn.org (EAPN - European Anti Poverty Network)

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www.eaps.nl/ (European Association for Population Studies)

www.easpd.eu/ (European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities)

www.efrp.org/ (European Federation for Retirement Provision)

www.enar-eu.org (ENAR - European Network Against Racism)

www.esn-eu.org (ESN - European Social Network)

www.eurocadres.org/ (EUROCADRES - Council of European Professional and Managerial Staff)

www.eurocarers.org/ (Euro carers - European Association Working for Carers)

www.eurocities.eu/main.php (Euro Cities)

www.eurohealthnet.eu/ (Euro Health Net)

www.europarl.europa.eu/ (European Parliament)

www.european-microfinance.org/index2_en.php (EMN - European Microfinance Network)

www.family-eu.org/cms/index.php (FAFCE - F.deration der Katholischen Familienverbande in Europa)

www.idies.org/index.php?post/Linstitut-de-la-protection-sociale-europeenneIPSE

www.womenlobby.org (European Women's Lobby)

www.youthforum.org/ (Forum of Young People in Europe)

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V. Recommendations to policy makers/older adult education providers

Whereas Europe has been experiencing significant demographic changes among which ageing, ageing of the population and ageing of the workforce,

Whereas life expectancy has considerably increased and fertility rate has been decreasing,

Whereas it is essential to encourage older people to keep acquiring competencies (knowledge, skills, attitudes),

Whereas it is essential that older people use their active ageing competencies in their personal life as well as for participating in local, social and economic development,

Whereas it is crucial that older people use their competencies as to be self-sufficient as much as possible and remain included in ageing society,

Now, therefore, we, the organisations participating in the P3AE project funded by European Union and ERASMUS+ Programme have worded the following recommendations to be considered by policy makers on all levels as concerns older people, older adult education, old age and engagement of older people for social and economic development.

Recommendation No 1

Everyone is entitled to take an active part in ageing society without distinction of any kind, such as age, race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Recommendation No2

Education of older people should be in tune with contemporary and anticipated social development: social objectives of this education should be given attention.

Recommendation No3

Education of all groups of older people and of all types should be provided.

Recommendation No4

Older adult education is to be supported by research and counselling as well as education of professionals and volunteers.

Recommendation No5

Policies should not use the discourse of weakness and dependence as regards old people.

Recommendation No6

Lifelong learning as well as lifelong work should be encouraged.

Recommendation No7

Everyone shall develop and use his or her competencies to full potential, therefore ambitious educational programmes should be encouraged taking into account older people's well being as well as social and economic engagement.

Recommendation No8

Older people should fully develop their technological competencies and potentials along with other generations.

Conclusion

People in later life relate to other generations and therefore should be more extensively engaged in shaping the life of communities. Cooperation between generations and solidarity among generations are possible only when senior citizens *can and are allowed to age* actively. Education is one of the ways of active ageing and perhaps the most important one. Education in later life does not equate schooling, it has its own characteristics and mentors should be knowledgeable about them. Education of older people is education for personal growth, paid work, active citizenship and empowerment.

Education in later life as well as local, national and European policies should address people in later life as active people, taking on their part of responsibility in the society, people with potential and as people with a variety of psycho-social needs and specific issues. Senior citizens who are ready to engage in education concerning themselves and their peers as well as their relationship with other generations should take care to counter stereotypes which are contrary to this new image of active and participating senior citizens. To this end senior citizens should also have an improved understanding of European institutions and their policies relating to old age, as well as knowledge about European NGOs' activities concerned with older people's issues. Anticipating social changes, adapting to them or preparing for their consequences affecting older people can be both a topic and aim of European projects.

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Glossary

Active ageing

Active ageing is a political concept based on theories like: theory of activity in old age. A life-course approach to learning for active ageing stresses the importance of all ages and stages of life and acknowledges the intergenerational context within which individuals live. It recognises that ageing and learning occur within a broad life process, and that cultural experiences earlier in life shape later experiences, decisions and outcomes. A life-course approach also emphasises that events that matter to individuals in later life may not necessarily be best ranked in chronological order – most recent events are not necessarily the most important.

Ageing

Ageing is viewed as a process going on from the minute we are born. It is composed of evolution and devolution processes. It is a lifelong process, going on from cradle to grave.

Ageing population

An ageing population is defined as a population in which the number of elderly (65+) is increasing relative to the number of 20-64 year olds. This phenomenon occurs when the average age of a country or region rises due to rising life expectancy and/or declining birth rates. Every month more than a million people turn 60. The world is ageing rapidly. The number of people aged 65 and over will double as a proportion of the global population, from 7% in 2000 to 16% in 2050. By then, there will be moreolder people than children (aged 0–14 years) in the population for the first time in human history.

Andragogy

In the 18th century the French philosopher Nicolas de Condorcet argued that education should be for all including adults. The term andragogy, as opposed to pedagogy, however, was coined by Alexander Knapp, a German grammar school teacher in the 19th century.

Then it was used by the Journal of Adult Education and Malcolm Knowles (1913-1997) in his work of developing a unified system of adult education (The Meaning of Adult Education). The theory of andragogy is based on assumptions that distinguish it from pedagogy or traditional teaching method, shifting the focus from the teacher to the learner, self-directed learning and perspective transformation, etc.

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Autonomy

Autonomy in older age means having or keeping independence or freedom of action, rather than being treated as dependent. This competency concerns what is required to be an active older citizen, taking part in activities of benefit to the individual and society. The activities could involve doing voluntary work, or possibly some form of employment or paid work, also it could mean caring work in the family, or for others in the community to which an individual contributes can be a family.

Competency

Competency is not about being skilled or knowledgeable. Competencies encompass disciplinary or theoretical knowledge, experiential knowledge and skills validated by their use in real life situations. A brick layer may be skilled in laying bricks but becomes competent only when he is able to reflect upon his experience and generalise his experience to the extent that it can be argumented and transmitted. This word has different meanings. In relation to active ageing, it means what is required for older people to live and participate actively within communities and society. Although competency is often considered in terms of abilities of individuals, in this project there is a society competency level, which can be considered at least equally important. For example, the 'health' competency for active ageing not only requires individual behaviours which promote health, but also social structures such as healthcare systems that support older people to manage their health.

Demography

This is the study of human populations, using statistics to examine such aspects as the size, growth, structure and distribution of groups of people. Demographic analysis can be applied to a particular population group such as men and women aged over 65, and can take account of changes across geographical space and across time, in relation to dimensions such as birth, death, migration, and ageing.

Discrimination

Making a distinction on the basis what can not be changed: race, age, looks. Discriminatory traditions, policies, ideas, practices, and laws exist in many countries and institutions.

Education in later life

Education in later-life means organised and target oriented learning of different groups of older people.

Empowerment

Empowering older people means making them gain psychological, political and economic power through education as to take decisions.

Later life

The term was coined by Peter Jarvis and conference participants in 1995 in Ulm. Later-life refers to different stages of life and to different groups of older people: older workers, people about to get retired, retires who are in a dynamic process between work, retirement and old age, older people in institutional care or in general dependent older people. Policy makers refer to people who are at this stage of life calling them "older people", "older adults" and seniors or, now less frequently, "third agers".

Learning

Learning is a process of active engagement with experience. Learning happens if and when behaviour changes (activity, thinking, emotions, etc.). It is what people do when they want to make sense of the world. It may involve an increase in skills, knowledge or understanding, a deepening of values or the capacity to reflect. Effective learning will lead to change, development and a desire to learn more.

Learning by trial and error

A person learns by trial and error if he occasionally tries out new strategies, rejecting choices that are erroneous. Learning by trial and error may be very creative but it is time consuming,

Learning competency

The learning competency concerns what is required to continue to learn in older age, and to learn in a way that is relevant for older age. This might include formal and/or informal learning, and could involve a wide range of possibilities including learning skills and knowledge, learning something creative, or learning new technology like e-technology (computers and the Internet).

Leisure

Leisure time is time spent away from business, work, job hunting, domestic chores, and education. It also excludes time spent on necessary activities such as eating and sleeping.

Lifelong learning

This is the on-going pursuit of learning for personal or professional reasons throughout life and in a range of situations. Learning can take place not only in formal settings but also in non-formal learning groups, through daily interactions and in a wide range of environments. The Lifelong Learning Programme has been a European funding programme which has supported education and training for all age groups across Europe.

Motivation

Motivation shapes and encourages our behaviour. It can be extrinsic or intrinsic (inner). Motivation is a concept, which became popular with the development of marketing theories. It encompasses a number of elements like needs, aspirations, readiness to be active, emotions, knowledge etc.

Non-formal education

Non-formal education is education which is structured, has aims but privileges various methods concerning the accruing knowledge. It is closer to life than formal education.

Multi-dimensional ageing

Ageing is always multi-dimensional (biological, philological, social, psychological, cultural dimension) and should be approached as such.

Old age

Old age Is a period of human life, by no means just a waiting room for those who are getting closer to death. Old age is also a social construct, a matter of tacit agreement in each single society.

Public campaigning

Non-governmental organisations cannot do without public campaigning. Namely it is not enough to work for a certain deprivileged social group, but there is also a need to mobilize public support, influence behavioural changes, and set a local political agenda. Public campaigning requires research and relies on public media.

Socialisation

Socialisation is a process shaping self, resulting from social experiences and interactions.

Social justice, social fairness

Social justice is the fair and just relation between the individual and society.

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Stereotype

A *stereotype* is a preconceived notion, especially about a group of people. Stereotyped thoughts or beliefs may or may not accurately reflect reality.

Study circle

It is a format and method in adult education with shared responsibility of the learning process. They can be led by all members or by animator with the help of mentor. Study circles were initiated in Sweden and in the States. Slovenian study circles were started at Slovenian Third Age University and were developed to their fullest extent by Slovenian Institute for Adult Education. Slovenian study circles have both cognitive and activity targets. Study circles use written sources of knowledge.

Structuring time

Older people need to structure their time, to find ways to relate to other people. Education over a longer period of time is one of them. Even if an older person has only one activity a week, all other activities get structure around this one. All people need to have targets coming from structured time.

Transformative learning

Older adult education is transformative in nature, changing older learners' attitudes, values, and standpoints. Transformative learning theory says that the process of "perspective transformation" has three dimensions: psychological (changes in understanding of the self), convictional (revision of belief systems), and behavioural (changes in lifestyle). An important part of transformative learning is for individuals to change their frames of reference by critically reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs.