

# ECIL REPORT ON THE STATE OF ART OF INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING IN PARTNER COUNTRIES

Country: Slovenia

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## Introduction

During the Slovenian Presidency Slovenia suggested that relationships among generations should be supported in European Union. Later *Euro Flash Barometer On Solidarity Between Generations* revealed that relationships among generations were a problem in European Member States, older generations being considered as a burden to younger generations. Nevertheless, the concept of intergenerational education and the concept of intergenerational learning have been in existence and researched in Slovenia for at least two decades and intergenerational relationships were dealt with in legal documents due to the efforts made mostly by the Anton Trstenjak's Institute in Ljubljana.

During the last twenty years, following the separation of Slovenia from Yugoslavia, adult education in this country has been marked by new nationwide set initiatives focusing mostly on education for better living, better relationships and community development. Thus Faculty of Philosophy within University of Ljubljana devised *Andragogic Summer School and Andragogic School for students of andragogy, education for successful life*, dealing with functional literacy and basic skills, *exchange links, third age universities, study circles network* etc. All these initiatives were somehow intergenerational since all of them were closely linked with community which is intergenerational par excellence; all these initiatives were

supporting community development.<sup>1</sup>

As we view it, intergenerational education is about studying academic topics or about gaining knowledge and skills to solve a problem by problem learning, learning by doing etc. Moreover, it is also education meant for understanding generations and changing their position in society, as well as for their co-habitation, their living together, their solidarity and their cooperation. In order to plan, program, implement and evaluate intergenerational education and trigger intergenerational learning, it is necessary to understand different generations, their position in society and their characteristics.

With regard to what has been said before, intergenerational education and learning in our society seem to have one major social aim: construction or reconstruction of loose generational ties and prevention of the clash of generations. In addition, intergenerational education and learning enable the transmission of knowledge and culture as well as construction of new knowledge and common culture based on reciprocal and mutual learning and mostly oriented towards community.

## (1) About generations and the relationship between them

### **Perception of generations and the relationships between them in Slovenia**

Generally speaking the concept of generations and the pertaining categorisations are frequently misunderstood in Slovenia. Lately, for example, active population has

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<sup>11</sup> Slovenian theory and practice of adult education was very much influenced by the concept of *learning society*. If a society does not develop into a learning society, there is little progress (Mirčeva, 2005:10) For a society to become a learning society it is important that education and learning leave schools for other non-formal learning settings (more people have to be attracted to learning and also more generations), cooperation and creating new knowledge together have to be introduced. The concept of learning society pertains to learning and education in all settings, ages and social groups" (Ličen, 2006: 52)

been limited to the period of time between the age of 15 to 60, not taking into account the social and cultural conditions according to which young people in Slovenia do not start working before they are 20 years old. Similarly generations are not clearly defined. General understanding is that there are only three generations (probably under the influence of the "industrial" division of life span into the period preceding professional life (the first generation), the period of professional life (second generation) and the period after the end of professional activities or after the retirement. But there are, of course, studies dealing with the concept of generation.

Mirjana Ule thus argues that "a generation is a social group of people who are more or less of the same age and live in similar social and historic conditions, who have similar feelings about their times, who have been gaining similar experience and knowledge, who have been developing similar attitudes, values and have adopted similar life styles (Ule 2008: 20).

In Slovenia multigenerational relationships are rather well preserved within families. Therefore generations are mostly understood and approached within this context, much less within the context of community and society. In addition, the number of social changes has become so important (nucleus family being separated from the wider family, comprising grandparents), the modes of working have changed; organised educational opportunities have increased in number and quality. Slovenian population is ageing, globalisation is present and each of the mentioned and other changes raises generational issues, the issues of generational behaviour. Moreover, there are less intergenerational learning opportunities (Kump 2008). There are less intergenerational events than there used to be past.

Generational gaps can be felt, i.e. there are differences between generations in their attitudes and standpoints towards a number of individual and social topics, due to the inability of single generations to take into account other generations' standpoints and values (Russi Zagožen, 2001).

### **Numerous Social Changes and Generations**

The turbulent history of the 20th century influenced the new generations. *The silent generations* born between the two wars, *the rebellious generations* born in the forties, *the lost generations* born after 1950, the socialist generations, the socialist bohemia generations are some of the syntagms appearing in the press. In the press also other syntagms describing different generations can be found like *golden generations*, *courageous generations*, *generations X*, *generations Y*. *generations 1914-1918*. Extremely different denominations of generations clearly demonstrate that there have been changes in our societies.

But the word *generation* embraces many more meanings than those that can be deduced from the Slovenian press. Actually, *understanding generations means understanding the phenomenon of social change* and by going back to the definitions of generation, three central aspects of social change can be highlighted:

- social differentiation, inequalities of generations and within generations themselves;
- changes in the mode/modes of socialisation and integration, as well as the destabilization of the model of adult age;
- political relationships and generational justice which seems to have been lacking over the last twenty years;

Social problems resulting from generational differences can already be felt in Slovenia and will be even bigger in the future unless there is ability and readiness to redistribute and better allocate wealth and benefits to generations, and unless there is ability to ensure a role for all generations in smoothing out the consequences of social history. If social issues of generations continue being overlooked, if there is a constant tendency to smooth out their consequences, irreversible tensions and frictions might be produced hindering back the construction of collective solidarity.

Two concepts were adopted in social sciences: *generation* and *cohort*, a cohort by birth referring to population that has just one thing in common: its members were

born in the same year. A cohort might be understood as a kind of extreme simplification of the concept of generation, since all the different common characteristics of generation are here reduced to just one, the year of birth. The concept of cohort is being used in demography since 1968. The concept of cohort having been used in demography since 1968, cohorts are neutral groups, groups without specific characteristics and In the pair of concepts *cohort and generation* there is the same kind of rapport as in the pair *social layer or stratum and social class*. On the other hand it is possible to make a distinction between *social generations* and specific *historic generations*.

Consequently, generation is as strong word and a complex one, but it is also a tricky word embracing quite different meanings. And more importantly, a generation is composed of children of managers, intellectuals occupying responsible positions, there are workers' children, there are women and men, rural and urban inhabitants, etc. Generations have different values and attitudes towards different social issues like contraception, interruption of pregnancy, single parenting, homosexual couples, the role of politicians, etc. The generation of baby boomers for instance has different political attitudes towards a number of social issues.

Some generations can benefit from the advantages brought about by previous generations. Generations coming after other generations are not in a position of equality. The following generations profit from economic growth, intellectual growth, cars, electricity etc. resulting from sacrifices of the previous generations. And some generations owe a lot to their ancestors and are indebted to them. But they cannot pay their debt back to them. At the most they can pay back the debt to their own children, on condition they have, what is important, historical consciousness.

Any generation is characterized by specific processes of socialisation. Behind generation there is something with a structuring effect like some kind of specific experience. For some generations being adult has meant complying with the wishes of their families and society, having a stable position in society, a stable family

position. This is the old model that is still being imposed on generations that are today aged 45 or less. They are expected to be stable, to have a stable job, a stable family position and they also have to be extremely flexible. Today, adult age is different from the old model especially in the socially deprivileged groups since adult population does not necessarily have access to work.

Some periods of time were more favourable to some generations of Slovenians than they were favourable to others. To illustrate this point: the rate of poverty of today's younger generations is higher than the rate of poverty of today's older generations. Generations who participated the First World War in 1914, experienced massive unemployment, tuberculosis, syphilis, Spanish flu and were more challenged than the others. Those who were 20 years old in 1930 encountered big troubles. They suffered from social dynamics- economy slowing down and recession, unemployment.

Older generations who are now at an advanced age (about 80 years) arrived too early to benefit from different social advantages. Baby boomers who are now about sixty were much more fortunate. They graduated on average at 21 and three years later, on average they got employed.

Older Slovenian generations were socialised in recession and in the period of time of socialist low production. When in the following consumer society purchasing power tripled it devalorized the past and experience from the past of the older generations.

In 1975 there was a 15 % salary gap between the salaries of those who were 30 years old and those who were 50 years old. Later the generational salary gap was already about 30 %. Obviously Slovenian society used to be and still is to some extent in favour of older generations and older workers in terms of salaries, in terms of access to leading positions, in terms of profiting from holidays and leisure time. Thus baby boom generations were extremely mobile as compared to previous generations and following generations.

*Social generations* refer to cohorts that have specific characteristics -and have different social history-like a greater coefficient of suicide, they can be less unemployed, less ready to participate in decision making processes etc. Social generations may differ from historic generations whose members went together through historic events or periods. Different generations are characterized by different values, different modes of socialisation, different moral and religious values.

### **The Existing Forms of Solidarity And Cooperation Between Generations In Slovenia**

In Slovenia the most frequently mentioned form of cooperation between generations is the inter-*generational contract* allowing older generations to benefit from the fees paid by active population, i.e. younger generations. Also cooperation and solidarity of generations within families is intense. One could say that older people's solidarity with younger generations meets their need of transcendence. Now, that the State requires that additional social benefits paid out to support a number of older people be paid back after their death, many older people leave older people's homes and are cared for by younger generations i.e. their family, as to preserve the ownership of real estate for their descendants.

Older generations contribute their knowledge and culture to community and other generations working in public institutions (museums, hospitals, libraries, botanical gardens, theatres, cinemas). This kind of cooperation was launched by Slovenian Third Age University and has been very successful. Younger generations are being required and stimulated to go to older people's homes participating in their cultural events. Many study groups at Slovenian Third Age University offer the results of their studying to the community, to different generations (exhibitions, reading, storytelling etc.)

There are daily centres for older people's activities uniting younger and older volunteers and animating cultural, sports and educational activities in these centres.

There are also a few intergenerational centres in Slovenia, some of them uniting generations in their activities, some of them offering separated activities for different generations. These are also based on voluntary activities.

School children participate in older people's homes activities.

## (2) National Legal Framework Of Intergenerational Education/ Learning/ Learning Opportunities

Slovenia, like other European countries, has been forced to implement major reforms and adopt new laws regulating work, especially student's work and retirees' work. A new *Act on Labour relationships is under preparation* making students' work much less attractive for the employers and the students themselves, but it stimulates retirees' work imposing numerous limits nevertheless. Recently some types of work contracts have been heavily taxed rendering the situation of civil society organisations (they are very active in stimulating intergenerational activities) much more difficult. In addition, pension reform has risen retirement age for both men and women which necessarily impacts intergenerational learning. Lately, there has been public debate on intergenerational solidarity and numerous articles on the threat of old age and of the ageing population have appeared in national and other newspapers demonstrating and causing tension between generations. The unemployment of younger generations is as high as the unemployment of older generations and older workers.

### **Legislation Directly or Indirectly Pertaining To Intergenerational Learning And Co-Operation**



(1) The Slovenian Government in cooperation with civil society organisations drafted a *Strategy for Quality Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity 2011-2015*. The Strategy, like the previous strategies, will continue setting a framework for intergenerational cooperation and intergenerational learning.

(2) *The Slovenian Adult Education Strategy* developed within the lifelong learning policy document, adopted by the National Assembly (2007), is not going to be renewed. The strategy emphasises the 'strategic cores' among which there are those which are more directly related to the intergenerational learning and co-operation:

- access to learning based on the needs of the individual;
- key competences for learning and personal growth;
- learning to improve work practice and professional career development;
- learning as a source and driving force for the development of the community;
- counselling and providing information.

In general, the strategy aims at adjusting learning to the needs of the individual; developing a positive attitude to learning; developing key competences for a quality life for the individual and the functioning of society; increasing effectiveness and creating equal opportunities. One can argue that equal opportunities mean also active ageing and relating to other generations on the basis of learning.

(3) *The Adult Education Act* (2006) determines the fundamental principles of Adult Education in Slovenia. Unfortunately it does not specify that non-public providers can be responsible for adult non formal education but those are most important for introducing intergenerational learning.

(4) *The Gimnazije Act* (2006) stipulates that "everybody who is employed or unemployed or is older than 18 is entitled to education as an adult.

(5) The labour legislation, which refers also to adult education, includes the *Employment Relationship Act* and the *Employment and Insurance against*

*Unemployment Act* and also branch *collective agreements*. The Act gives workers the right to continuing education and training linked to the needs of their working processes, or to maintain their skills in order to remain in employment, or to increase their skills in order to create opportunities for promotion with adequate education and training. The labour legislation is important in relation to age management issues and active ageing as a means of intergenerational cooperation at work place and intergenerational learning at work place as well.

(6) *Law On Voluntary Work* This law was adopted in 2011 after a long public discussion. The law stipulates volunteering and organised voluntary work, basic principles of volunteering, conditions to be fulfilled for voluntary work as well as the rights and obligations of volunteers and voluntary organisations. The law is important for intergenerational learning since a lot of intergenerational learning is learning by doing which is a part and parcel of volunteering.

### (3) Intergenerational Education, Training And Learning Opportunities In Slovenia

#### **About Intergenerational Learning, Intergenerational Education And Community**

Intergenerational education/learning concerns different generations, which all undergo different processes of socialisation and integration and it helps understanding their similarities and dissimilarities.

Intergenerational learning is mostly about non-formal or informal transmission of knowledge, skills, norms and competencies among generations (Kump, 2008). Namely, each of us is a source of knowledge that is precious and unique. Cooperation and transmission of knowledge and skills (also among generations) is required in any social system.

“Intergenerational bonds and cooperation are said to enable (re)building of social networks. They develop community character and shape society of all ages. Therefore opportunities for the interaction, mutual help and learning of generations are to be provided for.” (Kump 2008). We also believe that inter-generational learning is at its best when directed towards community. Sustainable *structures for intergenerational learning and education are needed in order to re-establish intergenerational ties and intergenerational communities. Community is an important agent for intergenerational learning.*

In Slovenia the revived popularity of community today is being seen as a response to the today's crisis of solidarity and the feeling of less freedom. Namely, throughout history relating to others, belonging to community of all generations has been a way to get protection against hardships and to get recognition from the others, to shape one's identity and *to learn from each other*. But, the greater autonomy and freedom, the less the Slovenian feels indebted to anterior generations and the less they are sensible to the fate of future generations. Communities can be based on ethnicity, religion, class, or politics, territory, cultural heritage, interests, as they can be based on learning and education. They are based on what they have in common. *The nature of an intergenerational community is a creation of its members*, and it cannot be imposed on them. Therefore community might be understood more as a *symbolic structure than a social practice* and attention has been shifted from traditional community as a form of social interaction based on locality to a concern with *meaning and identity*.

### **Slovenian Tradition and Present Of Intergenerational Education And Learning**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the times of the constitution of national states, inter-generational learning and education as well as voluntary work were well developed on the today's Slovenian territory. There were reading circles, saving houses, libraries set up by volunteers, political camps uniting generations and enabling them to learn from each other, get common education and work together towards a

common objective. Having a common purpose is still extremely important for the generations learning together. However, this tradition of voluntary work and intergenerational learning was interrupted during the Second World War. Emergence of communism and consolidation of the socialist State led to the disappearance of civil society following Karl Marx's doctrine that the State should totally and completely take care of the citizens. As a result of it, voluntary and intergenerational learning and educational initiatives were hindered by the State, voluntary initiatives became suspicious and the existing ones were not built bottom up but, on the contrary, were »imposed« on the citizens. In those times voluntary work was mostly limited to collecting donations for the Red Cross, to academic folk art societies, intergenerational voluntary brigades building roads and bridges, etc. Building roads was accompanied by political instructions, a kind of civic education stressing the interdependence of all citizens. Nevertheless, all the so called voluntary and intergenerational activities were considered to be supportive of the then political regime and were of »political« and not civic nature.

To sum up, intergenerational learning, educational and working communities used to be organised top down as a part of political education, as "intermediate communities" ensuring cohesion of society and preservation of the political regime.

Today there are several formats of intergenerational education. Some of them are half institutionalised, supported by half institutionalised educational programmes for mentors (programmes for future intergenerational leaders in the field of quality ageing run by Anton Trstenjak's Institute, study circles run by SIAE, Slovenian Institute for Adult Education) or Family Literacy Programmes, intergenerational events run by Slovenian Third Age University, intergenerational houses and centres, etc.

### **Forms of Intergenerational Learning In Different Settings**

In Slovenia intergenerational learning, education and training are currently not provided by a wide range of providers. Those who are specialized in education of

older adults sooner or later start being interested also in the education of younger adults providing it with the help of different generations as learners and providers of knowledge. Most of them are specialized in the education of older adults which they extended to the education of younger adults: Anton Trstenjak's Institute specialized in programmes for quality ageing and intergenerational co-habitation, *Slovenian Philanthropy* delivering education for volunteering and cooperation of generations, *Slovenian Adult education Institute* with the network of study circles, exchange links, Andragogic Summer School run by *Faculty of Philosophy*, University of Ljubljana in a small locality in the West of Slovenia used to be interested in community development education and as such was also intergenerational.

*Providers of some kind of intergenerational education and learning are also older people's homes, centres of daily activities of older people, societies of retired professionals, theatres, municipalities, schools, tertiary educational institutions.* There are other societies providing education for all generations but their education could not be defined as intergenerational, though it is mostly meant for older generations to take care of younger generations and the other way round.

Generally speaking education in rural settings tends to be more intergenerational (more community based and oriented) than education in towns but it is not widely spread. Moreover, there is a lot of commuting which leaves little time for intergenerational learning and community development education.

There is little formal intergenerational education at work place, but since for many a work place is somehow a natural environment, a lot of informal intergenerational learning is going on at work place. The issue of ageing at work place is interesting for different associations like Association of Employers, Association of Personal Managers, Chamber of Crafts and Craftsmen, etc.

During the European year of Active Ageing some nationwide initiatives were set up, which cannot be called educational, being more of a promotional character. They promoted computer literacy, acquiring ICT skills for older people and volunteering

of younger generations for the benefit of the older learners. The "training" sessions lasted only some hours and the publicity leaflets were more against older people and the public image of their abilities (stereotypes like older people are poor learners) etc. than anything else.

Intergenerational learning takes place by using different methods like lectures, educational camps, learning by doing, cooperative learning, transformational learning, events, etc.

#### (4) Practice Oof Intergenerational Learning In Slovenia

##### **Principles of Intergenerational Education And Learning**

Only recently it has been understood that intergenerational education/learning has a social mission. Education and learning of older learners and intergenerational education learning have many similar characteristics. Neither of them is neutral. Neither of them is just about studying an academic topic. Both of them are meant to improve the position respectively of older people or of generations in general and both of them are meant to create ties with society and community. Therefore, intergenerational learning should comprise creating and disseminating knowledge about respectively older people and other generations.

Through observation and research of the existing practices of intergenerational learning and on the basis of the findings reported in the literature the following basic principles underpinning intergenerational education/learning have been formulated:

a) *Personal growth through access to culture and knowledge* i.e. valuable ways of living. Generations are supposed to become more confident, aware of the fact that they know, that they have a say in society, and that they have the right to participate in society. As a result of personal growth, their identity shapes,

generations are able to better understand themselves and what is going on around them. They are more at ease to express their feelings and thoughts. They develop mechanisms of defence but also mechanisms of repression.

b) One of the basic principles underpinning intergenerational education is also personal and *collective responsibility for education as well as responsibility towards other generations and community*. Generations are responsible to the community for which they perform activities and actions.

c) *Active ageing* is also a principle underpinning Slovenian intergenerational education. Moreover, it has been emphasized *that* by means of the education of older people and intergenerational education-which is an activity- the artificial milestones dividing one's life into well-separated ages might be better coped with. Education in later life has been considered as a measure to ensure continuity of living in society.

d) *The principle of interaction and mutual learning* among generations has been underpinning adult educational practice. Thus, intergenerational learning links are a part of the organisational structure of the third age universities and of the concept of self-help groups. Mentors at the third age universities are aged 23-91. Students are over 50 up to 90 years. Not only is the University promoting ties among young and old generations. An important task is also promoting learning and productive ties among different generations or cohorts of older people. Ageism is to be banned also from these cohorts and their interacting.

f) *The principle of empowerment and social responsibility* is present in both educations in later life and intergenerational education. Students involved in intergenerational learning produce TV programmes, magazines, radio programmes. They organise round tables, press conferences and thus tackle a number of topics in relation to the generational issues. In self-help groups' members learn about their values, their rights, their duties towards other generations and community in general.

### **Outstanding Initiatives and Current Providers Of Intergenerational Learning**

### **Social Network Of Intergenerational Programmes For Quality Ageing And Solidarity Co-Habitation Of Generations And Anton Trstenjak's Institute**

Is a system of programmes comprising 24 programmes supporting either older people or intergenerational relationships or both. The programmes can be adopted by local communities wanting to set up an intergenerational centre. Anton Trstenjak's Institute has been setting up intergenerational groups preparing young people for socializing with older people. Over twenty years more than 2000 younger people have been educated all over Slovenia for setting up new groups and for socializing with older people.

<http://www.inst-antonatrstenjaka.si/medgeneracije.html>

### **Cultural Mediators in Public Institutions And Slovenian Third Age University**

Slovenian Third Age University (a network of 45 universities in 44 localities) has conceptualized and launched several intergenerational initiatives pertaining to older people's learning and working as "professional" volunteers in intergenerational communities of volunteers. It has introduced cultural mediators into museums and cultural mediators into hospitals and is about to adapt the developed model to garden volunteering and learning. In the three above mentioned cases a partnership of Slovenian Third Age University with public institutions was set up, based on older people's learning and consequent older people's voluntary co-operation with younger employees at their work place and younger visitors. Cultural mediators-*garden volunteers is*, the most recent among the initiatives, was developed following the EMIL meeting in Lisbon and under the influence of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation's priorities. [www.univerzazatretjeobd-drustvo.si](http://www.univerzazatretjeobd-drustvo.si)



## **Study Circles Network and Slovenian Institute Of Adult Education**

Slovenian Institute Of Adult Education (SIAE) in initial cooperation with the founders of Slovenian Third Age University conceptualised the Slovenian type of study circles (different generations learning and working together for the benefit of the local community) and set up a large network of study circles which are learning and action oriented and exist all over the country even in very small localities. A specially (at the SIAE) trained leader sets up a local group, members of the group in turn coordinate the learning sessions and set up learning and action goals. The SC has been very popular in Slovenia since their beginning and are currently spreading all over the country even in very remote places. The topics SC have dealt with so far are language learning, learning about other nations' culture, customs, folk music, culinary art, geography , history etc. <http://sk.acs.si/>

## **Intergenerational Community Centres and Fruits Of Society Set By Slovenian Philanthropy**

In accordance with the older strategies for Quality Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity new intergenerational centres are being set up and will be set up in single municipalities also in accordance with the new Strategy. Also Intergenerational volunteering has been initiated. An example of such centres is *Fruits of Society* (Slov. *Sadeži družbe*) based in Murska Sobota [www.sadezidruzbe.org](http://www.sadezidruzbe.org)) and set up by Slovenian Philanthropy which is an independent, non-governmental, non-political, non-profit organisation, established in 1992. Its objective is to encourage caritative volunteering and other charity work by developing programs of voluntary work, by promoting volunteering through training and educating volunteers of all generations.

## **(5) Slovenian Third Age University As A Provider of Intergenerational Education**

## Intergenerational Projects

*Intergenerational projects based on reciprocal and mutual learning and joint work of young, middle aged and older generations can contribute towards maintaining and raising the employability of all generations.* First, they offer younger generations a quicker access to labour market owing to non- hierarchized work opportunities they get within such projects. Next, they enable middle aged generations to experiment with their work better than they can do it in their professional working environment. Finally, such projects offer possibility for the elderly to evaluate their past experience and knowledge through working and learning in intergenerational projects and to upgrade them. In addition to that, all generations involved in intergenerational projects have significant opportunities to learn from each other on condition, however, that those who plan such projects are knowledgeable and able to, shall we say "organise" opportunities for them to do it. A successful intergenerational project is to be carefully planned and conducted taking into account various aspects and goals and more importantly the need for exchange among generations.

Slovenian Third Age University started as an intergenerational project meant to become a permanent intergenerational activity. This was an intergenerational project though it was basically meant for *education of older people* and education about older people. 29 years ago it started as a voluntary intergenerational project of older retired professionals, active professionals and experts in different fields and young university students of educational sciences.

In those days the project was mostly focused on cultural education. The initial idea was essentially to enable older people to strengthen their social identity through getting aware of their cultural role in the society and to pass their knowledge, experience and culture onto younger generations. But, it quickly turned out that also younger generations had their knowledge, their own experience and culture. Thus, from the very beginning knowledge experience and culture were also passed

by younger generations on the older ones. *Intergenerational learning and education are a two-way process taking place over a longer time.*

Moreover, hand in hand, all generations started building together Slovenian Third Age University. In this common activity past knowledge and skills were revived and new knowledge and skills were constructed together by the participants. Young students of andragogy started setting up study circles together with older people, retired professionals and middle aged professionals. They all got involved in common learning and organisational activities. They also got involved in common activities for the benefit of the local community. They learned painting and each year they set up an exhibition. They learned translating and they translated interesting texts to improve the life of older people. They translated books dealing with psychological problems of for instance hyperactive children ... which was for the benefit of all generations. They studied art history and they took on work of cultural mediators in museums. They learned research methodology and they conducted research work for the national museums. They learned about the media and they produced their own magazine, a series of radio programmes broadcast on the national radio, a series of television programme ... They learned art history and local history and they got involved in cultural tourism ... They set up drama groups producing their scripts and they start performing for various institutions in the local community. Which was for the benefit, of course, of everybody in the community. They learned transactional analysis and about the needs of grandchildren and they set up a new organisation "Adoptive grandparents ..." etc. They learned about new technologies and they started producing web pages for different civil organisations. At this university which has developed in a true social and educational movement, targeting social changes retired professionals continue teaching their peers and younger people thus maintaining and upgrading their professional knowledge and skills. At Slovenian Third Age University special study groups were created along with the study circles for older students.

Numerous learning and other activities have been performed by young, middle aged and older generations as a result of their joint theoretical and practical

learning, their theoretical learning and learning by doing aiming at a tangible result (a survey, a book, an exhibition, a radio or a TV programme, a new temporary or a permanent activity, a service etc. Many members of Slovenian Third Age University, regardless of their age- turned their knowledge, skills and competencies they had acquired there into a professional, first or second career. Many others who got involved in the education for voluntary work set up new civil organisations or joined the existing ones in the local community (help lines) etc.

Slovenian Third Age University started in Ljubljana with six older students over 55 and a 32 years old mentor. It was not an easy undertaking in former Yugoslavia where civil society did not have "le droit de cite". Nowadays, there are 45 universities in 44 four towns striving for a better position of all generations in the society, providing educational, training, e-learning and working opportunities for younger and older generations.

### **Cultural mediators in public institutions, a recently developed project supporting intergenerational education and co-operation**

Slovenian Third Age University network has been developing and has been experimentally implementing a new, comprehensive model, aiming primarily at the education of older people for personal growth and voluntary work and civic engagement in general, and simultaneous "education" of the representatives of public institutions to integrate volunteers in their activities. The programme was for different generations pursuing the same goal and purpose - introduction of new social roles for older people in public institutions and transforming their views and the views of the staff as regards volunteering. After the implementation of the educational and training programme, museums and other public institutions are enabled to integrate highly educated older people as volunteers and older people are able to take on voluntary roles that are far from being traditional since older people's individual culture and newly acquired knowledge and skills are taken into account. Not only do the volunteers fit in the existing institutional structure, but

they also contribute to shaping their voluntary role within it. More importantly, this new model comprises also parallel public campaigning for raising public awareness about new social and volunteering roles of the elderly, about intergenerational learning and above all intergenerational co-operation.

This model can be said to be a new major breakthrough in adult education and intergenerational education in Slovenia. Namely, Slovenian Third Age University – together with selected institutions – has been offering opportunities to older adults to learn and to work together with the staffs which are composed of different generations. Thus older students learn together with other generations and work with them as volunteers and in public institutions ( public space!) in the fields of culture, education and health care, as well as preserving bio- diversity. What makes the difference here? These volunteers do not only fit into the present structure of the institutional activities, but they learn together with other generations pursuing a common purpose- and this is important for intergenerational learning and education- contributing their knowledge from which staff and institutions may benefit and consequently ameliorate their activities.

## Summary and Recommendations

In order to bring back organised intergenerational learning and education, a move should be made from the world of teachers, experts and policymakers dictating what has to be done or taught to a world of individuals having to build their knowledge and skills with the help of other learners and of mentors. This would be a true come back but also a true revolution which can be done only if education is not separated from other sectors of society which is mostly the case of non-formal education.

How to act to implement this idea? Opportunities are to be created for people of all generations to meet, to get to know each other and to learn together. They need to be connected constructing a world of mutual “servants”, servants in the noble

meaning of the word, or a world of partners creating new opportunities for mutual learning and common action. With this in mind the nature of education of older people or education of generations changes a lot.

Half institutionalised accredited programmes are needed supporting the idea of intergenerational learning and the development of a network of intergenerational formats and organisers.

Intergenerational education and learning should become a topic of university studies together with the education of older people and education for volunteering.

More research is needed in order to set up a wide public campaigning and in order to develop new intergenerational programmes as well as support the existing ones.

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