

European Cinema for Active Ageing



**LIGHTS,  
CAMERA,  
ACTION!**

65+

# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## **ACTIVE AGEING AND LEARNING FOR ACTIVE AGEING AND EUROPEAN CINEMA REVIEW**

<http://cinageproject.eu>

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### Introduction

The purpose of the CINAGE Project is to produce, test and validate a course targeted towards senior populations in the EU. The Project is developed by four partners, the lead partner being Portugal and the three other partners Italy, Slovenia and the UK. The Course will be based firstly upon a review of approaches towards the six competencies, identified by the EU as significant in developing policy towards active ageing within the EU and, secondly, upon a review of European Cinema. The two reviews will seek to provide an overarching review of attitudes towards active ageing, based upon a review of the literature on active ageing in the four partner countries, as well as an assessment of the popular stereotypes that can be discerned in European cinema. Central to the development of the course will be self- reflection based upon, initially, the review of cinema, and developed by members of the Focus Groups selected by each partner to review European cinema. The Course itself will focus upon developing short films, whilst the selection of the six feature films that make up the CINAGE course package will provide a starting platform for continuing self-reflection by Course participants.

## ACTIVE AGEING AND LEARNING FOR ACTIVE AGEING

### 1. Background and methods

The European Commission identified active and healthy ageing as a very important area. A structured critical literature review used evidence from 2000 onwards, across UK, Italy, Slovenia and Portugal. The review considered six competencies for active ageing: Learning; Civic and Community; Health; Emotional; Financial/Economic; Technological, in EU, national, and regional (Umbria) contexts.

### 2. Demographic context and active ageing principles

Rising life expectancy across the four countries poses challenges: in Portugal the population aged 65+ is projected to rise from 19.5% in 2011 to 35.72% in 2050; in Slovenia the proportion aged 65+ is expected to rise from 24.8% in 2020 to 33.5% in 2059, in Umbria, the population aged 65+ currently totals 23.2%, and in the UK 2030 there will be 51% more people aged 65+ compared to 2010. The four areas in the 2012 European Year for Active Ageing are employment, social participation, independent, healthy and secure living; and enabling environment (EU, 2013). Underlying principles include sustaining a balanced life-course process; positive definitions; inclusiveness; multi-dimensional and empowering approaches.

### 3. The competencies

**Learning.** The trend is for participation among older people to be higher in non- formal than formal learning, and to lessen with age. The University of the Third Age (U3A) has played a vital role. In Portugal U3As are mainly urban, and include various areas and subjects, including arts (as theatre or painting), socialisation or travel and study visits. In Slovenia, networks of U3As and

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other providers support personal growth, paid or non-paid work, active citizenship and local development. In Italy, U3As play a vital role to overcome the dropping involvement of older people, in the UK U3A learning strongly engages with health and emotional interests, less strongly with others. Lifecourse inequalities impact on later life learning.

**Civic and community.** Civic and community participation can be assisted by flexible retirement transitions, supporting volunteering opportunities, recognising and rewarding family care, and valuing creative activity. As in Portugal, project interventions can encourage active ageing through improving community environments supporting social participation and inclusion. Education can promote skills for democratic citizenship, as in Slovenia. The growth of volunteering in Italy runs alongside traditions of family care (grand-parenting). In the UK volunteering is strongly targeted in spite of cuts in financial support to the voluntary sector.

**Health.** Promoting health for active ageing needs to take account of diversity by age and health status. The Portuguese National Health plan promotes intervention principles of autonomy, active participation, self-fulfilment and dignity. In Slovenia, a high proportion of older people have a long-standing illness: self-care depends on functional capacity, opportunities for stimulating activity, and attitudes. In Italy, the focus is on lifecourse lifestyle and on integrated home care. In the UK, influences on well-being include an asset based outlook, social engagement and setting own norms. Informal learning with social engagement can improve wellbeing.

**Emotional.** The evolution of family structures is a big factor in emotional wellbeing in Portugal where a focus needs to be on appropriate homes for older people. In Slovenia mental and emotional concerns are a most frequent reason for using primary health care: positive leisure activities are predictive of emotional satisfaction. In Italy the crucial role of extended family and friendship in emotional wellbeing is known, along with independence, dignity, care and support. In the UK, research highlights the importance of independence, control, autonomy and activities that reduce loneliness.

**Financial/economic.** Labour force participation, a key factor in promoting active ageing, fell substantially in Portugal from 78% in 1974 to 52% in 2008. In Slovenia, only 1 in 3 of people aged 55+ are employed. In the UK, long-term unemployment is highest among over 50s. There is a need for non-discriminatory attitudes at work and pension systems rewarding later retirement to reduce financial anxiety. In Italy retirement tends to be sudden; rising proportions of the elderly live alone.

**Technological.** In Portugal where older people use computers less, training is needed for digital inclusion towards autonomy, and social participation. In Slovenia, both assistive technology and internet use needs developing: older people alone are disadvantaged if not internet users. In Italy internet use is growing among older people, but households with only older people are less skilled. In the UK older people value digital, but need support as circumstances and technology move on.

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### 4. Needs and recommendations

A lifecourse learning approach is vital, considering diversity, citizenship, creative leisure, relationships, resilience, and removing structural barriers. Strengths of U3As can be expanded through effective partnerships and activating other learning sectors. Portugal emphasized joining up different policies, public and private initiatives, principles of autonomy, participation, self-fulfillment and dignity, action for caregivers and developing more participatory and learning spaces. Slovenia emphasised the need for formal and informal education towards knowledge, culture and self-realisation, dialogue between different older ages, and passing knowledge across generations. Older age needs a holistic, less medicalised approach, considering the balance between happy and productive later life. Gender issues need attention. Lifelong education requires more flexible transitions from work. Italy recommended a professional qualification of expert in lifelong learning; and further training for work-retirement transitions. Older people's increasing commitment to volunteering needs to be seen as a strength. The UK recommended including older learners in educational planning, affordable courses, increasing pre-retirement training, challenging inequalities, developing opportunities to fit volunteering with informal care and leisure interests, and promoting health through peer networks. An empowering, strengths based focus is needed, respecting the variety and resources of older people. Finally, society needs challenging imaginatively to rethink older age.

## EUROPEAN CINEMA REVIEW

### 5. Background and methods

The central element of the CINAGE Project is to explore the way in which contemporary European Cinema reflects the six competencies and this research was conducted in parallel to the research into active ageing and learning.

Focus Groups of up to twelve members were based upon cross-section of gender and age ranges from 55 – 60+, and selection was based upon people who were people involved in active learning, either as participants or providers, and experts European Cinema.

Each partner country held two full meetings of the Focus Groups, an initial one that introduced members to each other and to the CINAGE project itself. The approach towards reviewing films were also discussed. After the viewing period, an intensive month during which each member of the Focus Group was required to watch and provide comment upon twelve films, a Final Meeting was held.

The final meeting considered not only the general response of the group towards the films, but also a discussion about the process of review and response to the CINAGE Project. Discussions included responses to the six competencies as well as to the way in which the competencies were portrayed. Discussions also included comments on the relevance of the six competencies to the member's own lives and experience.

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### 6. Film Analysis

At the first partnership meeting it was decided that each partner should select three films with each partner being allocated a selection of EU countries from which to select the three films with each partner nominating an individual with expertise in cinema to oversee the selection. Apart from the specific requirements that each film should reflect as many of the six competencies as possible, the films selected had to have sub-titles in the appropriate languages. Each partner screened a large number of films either via national and international film databases or through viewing before arriving at the final selection of the three films nominated. The films selected for viewing were: *Amour* (France), *Saraband* (Sweden), *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* (UK), *Mid-August Lunch* (Italy), *Night Boats* (Croatia), *Good to Go* (Slovenia), *Vidage Perdu* (Belgium), *Cloud 9* (Germany), *A Lady in Paris* (France), *Empties* (Czech Republic), *Before Twilight* (Poland) and *Elsa and Fred* (Spain). Each member of the focus group was provided with a copy of the film on DVD, or via downloads, and had to complete a series of questionnaires on each film. With each film, the focus group members had to comment upon the approach to each of the six competencies and whether the film treated the competency negatively or positively from the perspective of active ageing. Assessments of characterisation were also made, together with an overall response to the films. There were some interesting differences of opinion. The United Kingdom tended to approve of films that they felt were honest and realistic about the problems of active ageing with regard to the six competencies whilst Slovenia and Portugal tended to support films that showed active ageing in a positive light. Thus whilst *Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* was admired by most Focus Group members elsewhere, in the United Kingdom it was regarded as over-optimistic and unrealistic as a result.

### 7. Final Questionnaires

This difference of approach was also reflected in the Final Questionnaires that explored the themes and ideas around the six competencies themselves. Particularly interesting however were the responses of the concept of ageing itself, including the age when old age began (55 onwards), the different stages of ageing, and the variations. Some members felt that economic wellbeing was most significant, whilst others felt that health was more important.

Focus Group members were also asked to reflect upon the reason why they liked watching films, with responses ranging from being entertained and comforted, cultural habit, the wish to be informed as well as entertained.

### 8. Response to the CINAGE project

Each Focus Group member was asked to comment on the CINAGE project. There was general enthusiasm for the project with many members feeling it was both an innovative and necessary project and one that would add knowledge and understanding to the needs of senior citizens in the EU. There was a general response that the requirement to watch all twelve films and complete questionnaires had been rather onerous and that the requirement to relate each film to the six competencies had not necessarily helped in assessing the value of the films to active agers.

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### 9. Final Film Selection

There was considerable difference of opinion on certain films throughout the various partner focus groups and after some discussion it was felt that the fairest way of arriving at the final selection of six films would be to add up the scores given to the films by each Focus Group Member in each of the partner countries. The six films selected were:

*Vidange Perdue/ The Only One* (2006) Dir: Geoffrey Enthoven. Belgium

*Vratné lahve/ Empties* (2007) Dir: Jan Sverák, Czech Republic, UK, Denmark

*Srecen za umret/ Good To Go* (2013) Dir: Matevz Luzar. Slovenia, Croatia.

*The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* (2011); Dir: John Madden, UK, USA, United Arab Emirates

*Jeszcze nie wieczór/ Before Twilight* (2008) Dir: Jacek Blawut. Poland

*Pranzo di ferragosto/ Mid-August Lunch* (2008) Dir: Gianni Di Gregorio: Italy

### 10. Evaluation

This was a complicated project completed in a relatively short time period. When Focus Group members started viewing the films the research into the six competencies across the partner countries had not been fully completed and was not available to Focus Group members.

However, the research itself ultimately provides considerable insights and the final six films reflect an intriguing cross-section of approaches towards active ageing and the six competencies as reflected in European cinema.

### 11. Conclusion

The review of active ageing literature and policy within the EU recognised firstly the considerable differences between various countries in the EU with, for example, retirement age in Slovenia starting at 55, whilst in the UK retirement age is being raised to 67. The demographic changes, that in each country see a rapidly ageing population, means that the value of a life-course approach towards adult learning is important because of its potential to develop a holistic multi-dimensional understanding of: active ageing; considering citizenship; creative leisure; rewarding relationships; resilience and adaptability and the removal of structure barriers concerning poverty and inequality. The ageing population in all countries is a significant challenge to social agendas and policies, requiring public and private initiatives to meet changing needs.

The review of European Cinema, and its depiction of the six competencies, similarly found variations in all four partner countries, although there was general agreement that all six competencies were essential in terms of the wellbeing of active agers. There was concern that the economic wellbeing of senior agers was not particularly well reflected. Conversely however, the value of community engagement, emotional wellbeing and, in particular, the ability to adapt to new technologies and ability to continue to learn, was highlighted in the films that were selected for the CINAGE package. Focus Group members found the idea of the CINAGE project extremely valuable and felt that the course proposal had the potential to contribute significantly towards senior citizens being able to provide, and disseminate, their own reflections upon the needs and benefits of active ageing.