



# TRUE TO AGE, TRUE TO GENDER

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WHAT ADULT EDUCATORS AND PROGRAMME DEVELOPERS SHOULD KNOW  
ABOUT OLDER WOMEN'S GENDER CAPITAL, SOCIAL ISSUES AND VALUES



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## **TRUE TO AGE, TRUE TO GENDER**

**What adult educators and programme developers should know about older women's gender capital, social issues, and values**

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**Editors:** Dušana Findeisen,  
Urška Majaron

**Authors:** Dušana Findeisen,  
Urška Majaron, Oana Dău-Gaşpar,  
Alina-Oana Zamoşteanu,  
Daniel Muranyi, Doris Breaz,  
Mirna Fusaro, Giulia Sfreddo,  
Luísa Oliveira, Cecília Pinto,  
Christina Harms, Iryna Protsenko,  
Rosine Dotsey, Karine Duperret

**Photos:** Janez Marolt (except. p. 48 -  
Unsplash & Tiago Muraro)

**Reviewers:** Prof. Dr. Nives Ličen,  
Prof. Dr. Ana Krajnc, Professor Emerita

**Proofreader:** Natalie Asmussen

**Layout:** Les Apprimeurs

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# Introduction

*True to age, true to gender*, TAG is an Erasmus+ project co-funded by the European Commission. It deals with *gender capital*, contributed by female learners to programmes of older adult education.

We will begin the Handbook by asking some essential questions.

Are adult educators, who are involved in older adult education, ready to identify and include women's gendered experience, their social issues, and their values into educational programmes they develop for them?

Are adult educators aware of their duty to empower older learners in general and older female learners in particular? And if so, how can they demonstrate their willingness to do it?

Finally, to what extent do gendered values, i.e. women's values, overlap with fundamental and universal European values?

Now, the educators' task is not reduced solely to the transmission of disciplinary knowledge and their role is not limited solely to the facilitation of their learners' learning. They should empower older learners whenever possible by including their gendered capital in the programme, by addressing gender

equality, by pointing at old age and denigrating social stereotypes about old age and gender.

Adult educators are concerned with values and changing attitudes. In relation to social values, each society (European societies included) looks back upon its own history, deriving its own set of values from it. Adult educators should also remember that values are interconnected. If one of them is weak, the others become vulnerable as well. An example of this is poor gender equality in a country where male politicians make decisions about women's bodies (interruption of pregnancy, to name one). Additionally, democracy is threatened when the government does not respect the rule of law. And peace is threatened when a large share of GDP is invested in weapons and military force, and a smaller amount is invested in education and science. Values have a great impact on decision-making, commitment, behaviour, actions and culture.

Moreover, the experience of the project partners has shown that only few Europeans could name with certainty the most basic "European values," those from which all other values of the European Union are derived.

Additionally, values, be they individual or social, are not stable. On one hand, which

women's social values are important in today's European societies and on the other hand how do basic European values (universal human rights; democratic principles; principles of the rule of law; separation of politics and religion; judgment based on reason, the human being as a measure of all things) meet them? Today's Europeans think and act in a humanistic manner, i.e. rationally, secularly, by observing the rule of law, democratically and respectfully protecting human rights. But, are basic European values and rights applied equally to men and women?

Women's values can be supported by discussing the issues affecting their gender. Thus, those issues are the topics of the modules of this Handbook and those of a corresponding True to Age, True to Gender blended course for adult educators.

Each Module has a short, catchy title followed by a longer subtitle. Furthermore, each module begins with an introduction explaining the topic of the module, its objectives and its meaning. This is followed by the titles of three units under the heading Module in a nutshell. Adult educators and older learners are systematically challenged to identify important theses in the Module and discuss them.

There are seven modules and two annexes in this Handbook, all written in English. Only the modules will be translated into the different national languages.

### ***The Editors***





Module 1

## **OLDER PEOPLE, OLDER WOMEN AND THEIR ENGAGEMENT**

**HOW DOES OLDER ADULT EDUCATION CONTRIBUTE TO OLDER PEOPLE'S ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY? TO WHAT EXTENT DOES IT HELP THEM GET AWARE OF THEIR RIGHTS AND ENABLE THEM TO COMMIT TOWARDS SOCIAL JUSTICE?**

Older adult education is about combining disciplinary knowledge, triggering experiential knowledge contributed by both learners and educators. It is also about fostering new knowledge. But not only that! Education of older people, who are pushed to the edge of society is meant to empower them to become active, participating and contributing citizens. Only committed and engaged older adults (older women) become rights holders enjoying and supporting greater social justice.

## Module in a nutshell

The module consists of three units followed by Check Your understanding and References.

- Unit 1. Older adults and the importance of their social engagement
- Unit 2. Contribution of adult education to women's social participation and activism
- Unit 3. Being rights holders in old age
- Check your understanding. Are the following statements True or False?
- References

## Unit 1. Older adults and the importance of their social engagement

Life expectancy throughout the world has been increasing over the past centuries, along with the scientific development, which offered opportunities and solutions that allowed the world population to keep its older people and reach new stages of life. **Old age** is a term that nowadays mostly refers to **people above 65 years of age**, as stated by the World Health Organization (2011), although there are countries in which this threshold is lower – Australia, 50 years (OFTA, 2019), – Africa, 55 years (Sagner, Kowal, Dowd, 2002).

Despite the different numbers defining it – which have been changing and will keep changing with time – old age actually represents for all people **the final stage within the life cycle**. It is characterized by limited mobility, by increased frailty and susceptibility

to disease, injuries and sickness as compared to younger adults (WHO, 2011). There are many changes in old age in terms of family and social interaction, work relations, learning opportunities and leisure time (WHO, 2011; OFTA, 2019).

Older people often face **aged-based stereotypes** – which are oversimplified and exaggerated beliefs about people or events – that may be positive or negative in nature. But stereotypes distort the reality and leave aside the particularities. Stereotypes often inhibit the engagement of older people in their community and their personal life. To illustrate this point, we are sure that all of you have heard about older people being less productive in comparison with younger adults; that they cannot learn well due to their

old learning patterns; that they are wise, but forgetful (OFTA, 2019). Some older people might be forgetful, but not necessarily all of them.

Why is the older adults' engagement so important? Older people are experts, possessors of social and cultural capital that is important for the community and can't be lost. Let's take a look at the **benefits of older adults' engagement** (OFTA, 2019).

### Benefits for themselves:

- they feel valued;
- their confidence and their enjoyment of life raise, while their health and well-being increase;
- they get more opportunities to express their ideas and needs feeling that their opinions matter;
- their trust in the governmental institutions is improved;
- their sense of achievement grows;
- they can help dispel myths and stereotypes associated with aging.

### Benefits for the governmental institutions:

- they learn from older people's diverse knowledge and experience;

- they gain a better understanding of the opportunities offered by a large and growing consumer market;
- they may benefit from older people's experiences in social activism;
- they are more trusted responding to community ideas;
- they may be at the front of a whole new approach of aging;

### Benefits for the community:

- it may learn from older adults' knowledge and experience;
- it may put to good use the help, the work time, the social connections – everything that the older people are willing to offer;
- it may develop intergenerational relations, proving that all-ages-friendly communities are good for all generations;
- it will become more cohesive, able to use more social capital and to promote ownership over decisions;
- the quality of its decisions and its outcomes for the community will increase.



## Unit 2. Contribution of adult education to women's social participation and activism

Despite the steps made on the road of gender equity along the years, women are still considered to be a vulnerable category. As with older people, women are prone to a series of stereotypes which inhibit them from being completely socially and politically engaged. The more these two criteria intertwine, the more difficult it is for older women to bring their contribution to the community.

**Social participation** is defined as the involvement of an individual in activities that provide interaction with other members in the society or the community outside the home or family environment (Aroogh, Shahboulaghi, 2020). Social participation is based on social relationships and involves actions through which the personal resources are shared with others. Depending on the type of personal resources shared, there may be three types of social participation (Aroogh, Shahboulaghi, 2020):

- *community/ collective social participation*
- *productive social participation*
- *political social participation* – involves making decisions on social groups. This type of social participation may also be referred to as **social activism**, as it involves efforts directed to make political or social change.

*Social and civic competence* are fundamental to each person in the knowledge-based society and are expressed through the

person's ability to participate effectively and constructively in social and working life and to engage actively in increasingly diverse societies (Brand, Schmidt-Behlau, 2019). So, the question is: How do we stimulate women in general and especially older women for community and political social participation? Research results across several case studies suggest that adult education programmes play a key role in the way in which adult learners, either young or older, either male or female, understand and experience active social participation (Brand, Schmidt-Behlau, 2019). Thus, the key for engaging women, including older women, in social participation and active citizenship is meant to help them:

- to get to know their own resources and how to better put them to use;
- to feel empowered to act on behalf of their beliefs;
- to experience the feeling that their voice and opinions matter;
- to understand the principles of civil society and social change;
- to find their motivation towards a cause and shape their own voice.

In order to achieve all these goals, the adult education programmes – meaning all the forms of learning undertaken by mature individuals – designed for triggering women's social participation and activism should be focused towards three key dimensions (DGR-EC, 2003):

- **capacity** – developing a sense of agency, of competence and ability to make change happen;
- **responsibility** – taking responsibility for some social issue, responding to and coping with a challenge;
- **identity** – forming one's personal identity, developing convictions, opinions, ideas, connections between and about oneself and other people.

In this respect, adult education programmes have the potential of **raising awareness, structuring knowledge, shaping attitudes, nurturing personal resources and moulding community and civic competences** – all of which are imperative to promote socially and community active women and older people.

### Unit 3. Being rights holders in old age

Every human has rights and these rights do not diminish as people age. On the contrary, at some political levels it is believed that older adults should have more specific rights than the younger ones; in this respect, the United Nations has been debating the Convention of the Rights of Older Persons for decades, but it has not yet been adopted.

The rights of older people often cross paths with the age-based stereotypes. For instance, older people are most of the times perceived as a burden on younger generations, which might be true in the cases where the state is deficient, but if older people are allowed to keep paid work, if they have pensions or savings, they are in fact able to support the younger people by paying for grandchildren's toys, clothes or leisure time or by helping with paying mortgages or monthly car payments. Instead of promoting the idea of dependency on social protection systems, policymakers may **focus on empowering the older people to be active and self-sufficient**. Having rights includes the right to participation, the right to

have one's views, the right to make decisions and have a say in government decision-making (OFTA, 2019). All people, including the old ones, have personal resources – time, skills, competencies, knowledge, etc. – that may be put to good use in the community. **Each older person** can find their **own place within the social system** in a positive way, in a manner which is not a burden for other generations, but an **added value**. Thus, stimulating community, productive and political social participation is a healthy way of making the older adults benefit from their rights and, further on, a way of "unburdening" the younger generations.

Undertaking a partnership approach with older people means that the outcomes and benefits are shared. Treating older people as equals along with other stakeholders is important to increasing trust, and creating collaborative working relationships and genuine partnerships (OFTA, 2019). It is like the African proverb goes: "Those who respect the elderly pave their own road toward success."

## Check your understanding

Are the following statements True or False?

- 1 *Old age is the final stage of the life cycle?*  
TRUE FALSE
- 2 *Aged-based stereotypes are specific beliefs which reflect the particularities of the reality in old age?*  
TRUE FALSE
- 3 *The engagement of the older people brings benefits for themselves, for the government and for the whole community?*  
TRUE FALSE
- 4 *Social participation is based on social relationships and involves actions through which the personal resources are shared with others.*  
TRUE FALSE
- 5 *Adult education programmes are able to deliver knowledge, but cannot develop skills and shape attitudes.*  
TRUE FALSE
- 6 *Being right holders in old age is better achieved through empowerment to be active and self-sufficient.*  
TRUE FALSE

6. True  
1. True / 2. False / 3. True / 4. True / 5. False /

ANSWERS

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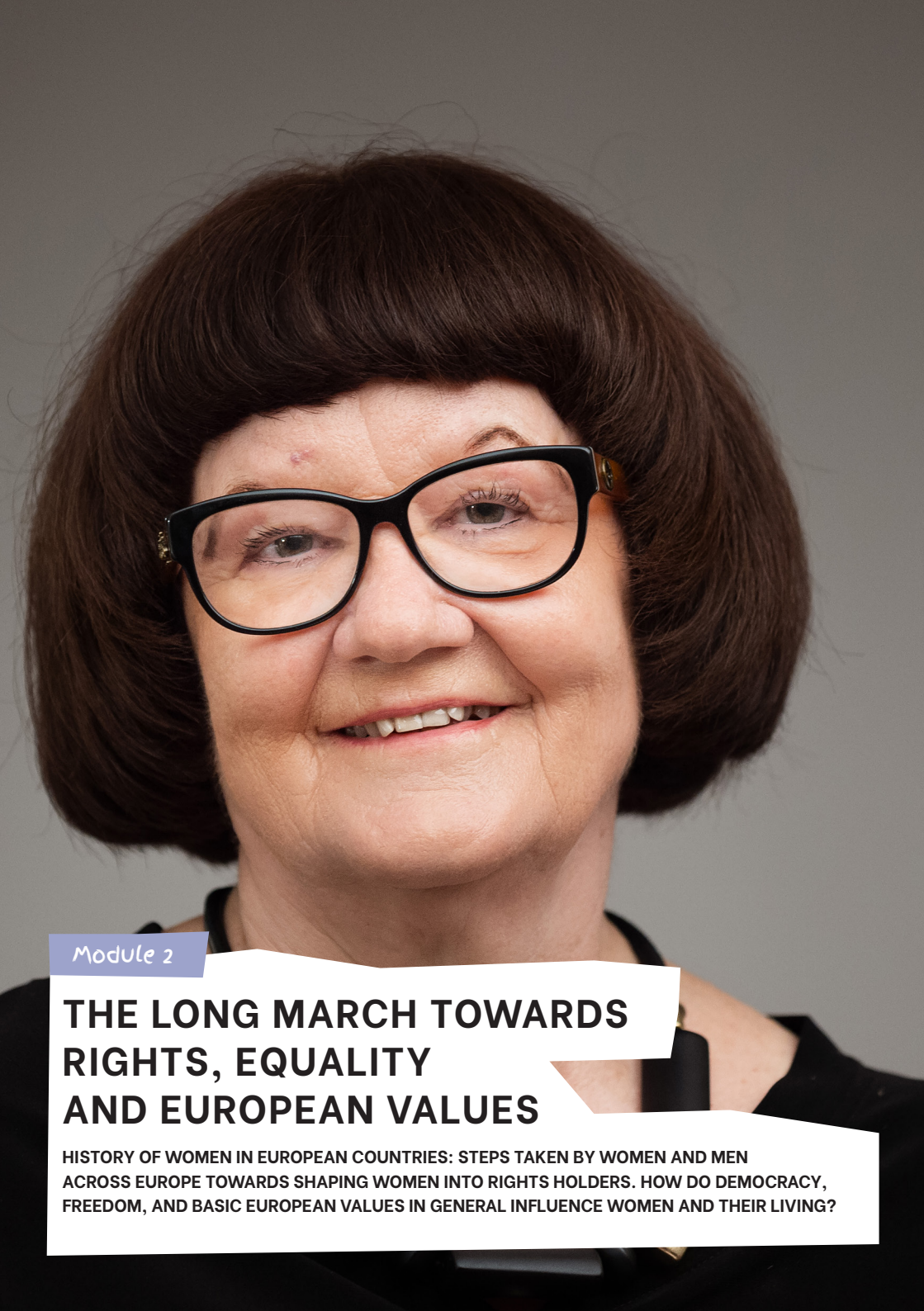
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## Module 2

# THE LONG MARCH TOWARDS RIGHTS, EQUALITY AND EUROPEAN VALUES

HISTORY OF WOMEN IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES: STEPS TAKEN BY WOMEN AND MEN ACROSS EUROPE TOWARDS SHAPING WOMEN INTO RIGHTS HOLDERS. HOW DO DEMOCRACY, FREEDOM, AND BASIC EUROPEAN VALUES IN GENERAL INFLUENCE WOMEN AND THEIR LIVING?

**This module is about the past and present position of women in society and the slow development of women's rights towards women becoming rights holders in modern European societies. Women's rights are not granted. On the contrary, efforts of empowered women to protect them are needed.**

## Module in a nutshell

The module consists of three units followed by Check Your understanding and References.

- Unit 1. Women's social roles in the past and present
- Unit 2. The long march towards women's rights and gender equality in European Union member states
- Unit 3. Women's rights, gender equality and European values
- Check your understanding. Are the following statements True or False?
- References

## Unit 1. Women's social roles in the past and present

As women represent half of our planet's population, we cannot simply ignore their presence in the forming of the world's history. From the beginning of the humankind, women had to overcome many obstacles in order to be able to change their condition of mother and to be allowed to participate in society together with men.

From the prehistorical until modern period, women were expected to be mostly household keepers and mothers. Their main duties were to procreate and ensure that the family was well fed and taken care of and that their household was properly run.

The 1789 revolution in Europe gives rise to a new technology that requires hands in factories. Women start equally participating

in industrial work though receiving lower wages than men.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century women started enrolling in university studies and working in certain specific areas. Before that, a working married woman had not been well seen. Taking care of her husband and children was her main duty.

Industrial revolution and war industries needed more hands. During the war there was a deficit of male labour and women replaced men at work. Consequently, their new role in factories was socially accepted even if they were married.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century started a change in values and a new era of rebellion towards tradition,

family and religion. In the twentieth century, the equal rights of women as compared to men's rights were recognized.

Today, the roles of women have changed drastically. There is practically no profession that would not be accessible to both men and women. They can both be a male or a female nurse, a prime minister or a president, a soldier, a teacher, a spacewoman, an artist, an actor, a computer scientist, a doctor, etc. Nevertheless, we also know that in some fields women are underrepresented. Some professions are still male-dominated including certain fields of science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine in some countries. Not only women are less represented in some fields of work, but also they are less paid for doing the same job and occupying the same position as their male counterparts.

Although women's roles have changed during the last 100-300 years, some aspects of their lives have remained the same. For many women, working outside home means having two full time jobs – the one at work and the other one at home. Generally, women are the

ones who take care of their house and the rest of the family members, who ran the errands and pay the bills, who plan school events and field trips.

When it comes to older women, their role can be downsized again to being a housekeeper and a grandmother and an emotional support to their husband as well as carers of other family members. Being old is often a challenge in many western and eastern EU countries as older people are being looked down and considered as a social burden to other generations.

However, their old age does not prevent them from continuing to be the solid and undeniable foundation of our society. If we are willing to listen and learn, we will understand that their importance goes beyond their role of carers of grandchildren. Their bodies may be more fragile, but their experience may be an ocean of wisdom that can guide younger generations. They are fundamental for transmitting cultural values to the descendants. They are guardians of cultural and social heritage.



## Unit 2. The long march towards women's rights and gender equality in European Union member states

Through centuries, women have struggled to have equal capacity and rights as men. Being called feminists or not, they took the steps towards shaping feminist movements. It was during the French Revolution when European women began to take up the banner of demands for social equality and marched on Versailles under the slogan "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity."

In those years, the first claims for women's political rights that should establish women as citizens were shaped. An important achievement was the Declaration of the Rights of Women and the Citizen written by Olympe de Gouges in 1791. This is one of the first historical documents defending equal rights or legal equality and the women's right to vote.

Women wanted to participate in matters of state, in creating the laws to which they had previously only been subjected. Suffragist movements emerged with Flora Tristán at their head. Feminist groups in the labour movement were influenced by "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State" written by Friedrich Engels in 1884. Some of them created associations and, soon thereafter, women's suffrage movements on both the national and international level. After the creation of a federation in the United States in 1890, the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies was created in Great Britain in 1897, the Deutscher Verein für

Frauenstimmrecht in Germany in 1902, and l'Union française pour le suffrage des femmes in France in 1909. These organizations were members of the International Women's Suffrage Alliance, founded in Berlin in 1904, which claimed to be a human rights movement.

After the decades of struggle and lobbying, women achieved their right to vote in different European states in the twentieth century.

While the right to vote had already been granted to the women of a number of US states since 1869, Finland was the first to take the step in 1906, through a reform that established a parliament elected by universal suffrage. It was followed by Norway in 1907, and then Denmark and Iceland in 1915. The First World War created the conditions that allowed the introduction of the right to vote in a number of countries: Russia in 1917 (following the revolution), Latvia, Estonia, Poland, the United Kingdom (notably with age restrictions until 1928), Germany, and Austria (following the overthrow of monarchies and the establishing of republics) in 1918, followed by the Netherlands and Luxembourg in 1920. In Spain in 1931, the newly-established Second Republic granted women the right to vote. In 1929 Romania grants limited suffrage to women. French women were granted this right in April 1944, in accordance with the wishes of General de Gaulle.

Italian and Slovenian (Slovenia as part of former Yugoslav Federation) women obtained the right to vote in 1945. Greece had to wait for the establishment of a parliamentary monarchy in order for suffrage to become universal in the Constitution of 1952.

This post war period was distinguished by the start of the so called new feminism and was marked by the names of Simone De Beauvoir and Betty Frieden. In those days there was already some talk of patriarchy, the equality of men and women, and the rights of women to their bodies. Simone De Beauvoir published *The Second Sex* in 1949, where she outlined her maxim: One is not born a woman but becomes a woman. Already in the 70s she would be followed by Kate Millet. There is no intellectual and emotional disparity between the sexes. The American psychologist Betty Freidan denounced in 'The mystique of femininity' that the male stereotype imposed to women in the fifties led to self-destruction. It is at this stage that Queer theory appears, which

rejects the classification of individuals into universal and fixed categories. *Sexual identity* is now the product of a cultural construction and not part of a biological determinism. It has become gender.

Today, there are many women's movements that seek to break from the unique and unifying gender visions. They promote their work-based diversity. In fact, the joint work has already had some fruits and women from all continents have deployed different strategies of action through the United Nations, non-governmental organizations or associations. In 1995, during the Fourth World Conference on Women, an unprecedented series of commitments were agreed and *women's rights were recognized as human rights*. More than twenty years after the adoption of the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, no country has yet achieved gender equality and discrimination against women continues to persist. For this reason, feminist movements around the world continue to fight to improve the living and social conditions of women.

## Unit 3. Women's rights, gender equality and European values

Gender equality “does not mean that women and men will become the same, but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities, and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.” (UN Women, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women).

According to the *Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU)* the EU's founding values are “human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities”. Being part of the European Union means to share and defend its fundamental values.

The principle of equality between women and men underpins all European policies and is the basis for European integration. It applies to all areas. Although inequalities still exist, the EU has made significant progress:

- equal treatment legislation
- gender mainstreaming, integration of the gender perspective into all other policies
- specific measures for the advancement of women.

The European Commission has developed the EU Gender Equality Strategy with policy objectives and actions to make significant progress **towards a gender-equal Europe** by 2025.

**The key objectives** are ending gender-based violence; challenging gender stereotypes; closing gender gaps in the labour market; achieving equal participation across different sectors of the economy; addressing the gender pay and pension gaps; closing the gender care gap and achieving gender balance in decision-making and politics.

Despite the challenges arising from the COVID-19 crisis, the Commission made significant efforts to implement the *Gender Equality Strategy* over the past year. It strengthened its fight against gender-based violence. In June 2020 was published its first-ever *EU Victims' Rights Strategy* and in February 2021 was launched an open public consultation on a new legislative initiative to better support victims and prosecute perpetrators of gender-based violence. The Commission adopted *Digital Services Act in December 2020*, which clarifies the responsibilities of online platforms, thereby contributing to women's safety in the internet. With the adoption of the proposal for a Directive strengthening the *equal pay principle* through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms in early March 2021, the Commission has taken a major step to improve the respect of the right to equal pay and tackle pay discrimination. Also in early March 2021, the Commission adopted an Action Plan to implement the European Pillar

of Social Rights, which puts gender equality at its core and establishes, amongst others, ambitious targets for women's participation in the labour market and the provision of early childhood education and care, which is very important in this context. In the 2020, a range of actions was announced to ensure that girls and young women participate equally in ICT studies and develop their digital skills.

There is no doubt, that a huge breakthrough has been made over the last centuries in what concerns women's rights and equality, nevertheless, the strategy by itself along with its objectives reminds us that a lot is still to be done in order to achieve true gender equality. To start reducing gender gap present in all societies, we need to start to get rid of gender typing from early childhood on.

## Check your understanding

Are the following statements True or False?

- 1 *The World War 2 creates a deficit of male labour. Women replaced men in war industry. Women's new role in the factories was socially accepted even after they got married.*
- 2 *Great Britain was the first European country that granted the women with the right to vote.*
- 3 *No country has yet achieved gender equality and discrimination against women continues to persist.*
- 4 *Social participation is based on social relationships and involves actions through which the personal resources are shared with others.*
- 5 *Being part of the European Union means sharing and defending its fundamental values.*

TRUE FALSE

TRUE FALSE

TRUE FALSE

TRUE FALSE

TRUE FALSE

1. False / 2. True / 3. False / 4. True / 5. True /

ANSWERS

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A close-up portrait of an older woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing sunglasses on her head. She has a gentle expression and is looking directly at the camera. The background is a solid, neutral grey.

Module 3

## **LITTLE MANUAL ABOUT GENDER**

**WHAT IS GENDER AND WHY GROUPS OF OLDER LEARNERS SHOULD STUDY IT?  
WHICH AREAS OF LIFE DOES IT AFFECT AND HOW?  
WHAT LANGUAGE REVEALS, CONCEALS AND IMPOSES?**



**Gender can be defined as a cultural construction of ideas of masculinity and femininity, sometimes weakly corresponding to the real potential of men and women. In other words, gender reveals how each of us has been socialized in relation to our sex. Reaching old age, women have a tendency to accept their stigma and be invisible as human beings. Invisible women “reach for the book: it is a weapon,” would say Bertolt Brecht. Knowledge about women, their social position, about fostering their *social identity* is a weapon. Take it in your hands is being said to women (and adult educators) in this module. In addition, it should be remembered that *gender affects all areas of life* and that language should be gender neutral whenever possible.**

## Module in a nutshell

The module consists of three units followed by Check Your understanding and References.

- Unit 1. Gender framework
- Unit 2. Life areas are affected by gender
- Unit 3. Gender and language
- Check your understanding
- References

## Unit 1. Gender framework

Have you ever observed how couples behave in public interviews? The journalist addresses the man first, then only, is the woman's turn. Men are talking, women are mostly waiting to confirm their ideas or to add some thoughts of their own. Such are social expectations related to gender. The concept of gender does not equate the concept of sex. “Women are not born as women, they become women” argues Simone de Beauvoir which states the difference between biological attributes attached to sex and social attributes attached

to gender. Social gender typing or gender construction begins from the very moment one is born. “What a cute little girl!” “What a strong young boy!” “Boys do not cry.” “Girls play with dolls not trucks”. “Girls like pink and boys like blue.” “Girls are soft spoken, boys can use rough language”. “This is not a female profession”, etc. Small remarks like these consolidate one's gender. Gender is socially constructed, but what has been constructed can be deconstructed, i.e. by education, political or ideological changes,

etc. To the socially constructed gender are attached attributes, social roles, stereotypes about men and women that are different given the historical time and cultural context.

Gender can be defined as a cultural construction of ideas of masculinity and femininity, vaguely corresponding to the real potential of men and women. Gender is included in a broader socio-cultural context, into which other important factors for its analysis are integrated, such as racial and ethnic origin, age, level of poverty, etc. In other words, gender reveals how each of us has been socialized in relation to our sex, it is a facet of social / cultural expectations and experiences.

In each society, women and men are assigned to different tasks, roles and social positions, so there are differences and inequalities between women and men with regard to the responsibilities assigned, the activities carried out, access to resources and control over them, as well as opportunities for access to decision-making.

Despite the progress made since the 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference on

Women discriminatory patriarchal norms still maintain power inequalities. One of the key points to access the women's rights is women's economic autonomy.

This is a reason to raise gender awareness as to help communities find ways to change existing beliefs, attitudes, and social norms that restrict gender equity and equality. Older women, in particular, should study gender issues and improve their critical thinking, so that they will be able to struggle against discrimination and self-actualise themselves.

As the research shows, it cannot be any longer ignored that being a man or a woman creates a different approach of the learner towards learning, mainly because formal, informal and non-formal contexts of learning may carry messages based on gender stereotypes that can be prejudicial to the individual's development. Experiences related to gender influence the way knowledge is acquired, the expectations one makes about oneself, the choices of learning subjects and one's self-confidence as a learner. The use of gender lenses to deconstruct such learned norms should be included in the field of older adult education as a way of promoting (social) subjectivity of contemporary older learners.

## Unit 2. Life areas are affected by gender

Gender socialization occurs through four major *agents of socialization*: family, school, peer groups, and mass media. Each agent reinforces gender roles by creating and maintaining normative expectations for gender-specific behaviour. Secondary agents such as religion and the workplace also consolidate such behaviour. Over time, repeated exposure to these agents leads men and women into a false sense that they are acting naturally rather than following a socially constructed role.

According to Gamble & Gamble family is a primary source of *gender identity* because it provides its members with their *earliest socialization experiences*. Family/ different kinds of families, reveals their values, the kinds of communication and influence in sex role development. The same authors argue that families continue to reinvent themselves to reflect the dynamics of the twenty -first-century life.

Most boys and girls learn very early which are the activities more valued for boys or for girls. The same occurs with the activities they are discouraged to undertake.

**The friendship of men** may not involve the same kind of intimacy that *characterizes women's friendship*. Some observers view them as less deep and more superficial. Perhaps a better explanation is that the kind of closeness they attain is simply different.

*For women closeness is intimacy; for men it is loyalty.*

Gender moderated some of the differences in personality traits in specific contexts. Women are said to be more agreeable with friends and with work colleagues. Men are much less neurotic with parents than women, but there are no gender differences in relations with friends and work colleagues. Gender differences may be specific to the situation or context. Personality differences between the genders may be due to varying social roles rather than innate differences. However, the fewer gender differences at work may be because work environments are likely to constrain behaviour in both males and females in the same way, therefore any differences between the genders will be smaller at work than in general.

Social and cultural norms determine the behaviour and beliefs within a specific cultural or social group. For example, older women are more likely to participate in volunteering while men are more engaged in physical activities within community. Older women are more often involved in education than men. Social and cultural norms highly impact individual behaviour in a broad variety of contexts.

*Health, illness, and violence are gendered.* Norms determine what is (in)acceptable in human interactions. Gender-based violence

mostly affects women and girls. The abuse can be physical, sexual, psychological, or verbal. Crises further increase the risk of abuse. Online violence against women, which includes gender-based hate speech, is a rapidly emerging form of gender-based violence.

The gender *pay gap* is a consequence of various inequalities women face in access to work, progression and rewards.

Around 30% of the total gender pay gap is explained by the over representation of women in relatively low-paying sectors, such as care and education. On the other hand, the proportion of male employees is very high (over 80%) in better-paid sectors, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

Women spend fewer hours in paid work than men on average, but more hours in unpaid work.

The glass ceiling: The position in the hierarchy influences the level of pay: less than 10% of top companies leaders are women. The profession with the largest differences in hourly earnings in the EU are managers: 23 % lower earnings for women than for men.

In some cases, women earn less than men for doing jobs of equal value.

Inequalities in professional success are sometimes attributed to women taking maternity leave after having children. Further, women are accused of intentionally seeking out jobs with fewer hours and lower pay in order to be more flexible for their children.

Gender pay gap has also been attributed to the diversity of workplace characteristics (education, hours worked, occupation, etc.)

The pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities between women and men in almost all areas of life.

## Unit 3. Gender and language

The linguistic structure of our mother tongue trains us to see the world and think in certain ways. For instance, there are masculine and feminine nouns in most languages that condition the way we see the world. Old age is mostly feminine, success is masculine.

It has been found that *gender neutral* language may increase equal participation of men and women in the labour market (it reduces the gender gap).

Women may feel excluded by language and are often erased linguistically. We should bear in mind that language is a choice and we can combat sexist language in all fields and manners: in public appearances, social media, etc.

*Gender inclusive language* includes everyone, even men. It does not harm anyone. Freshman becomes first year student, chairman becomes chair, you guys becomes you all. In short, language is a tool for building communities and we need a world that takes women seriously also from the linguistic point of view.

Gender communication differences begin during childhood. Girls are told to use their manners, play quietly, and be ladylike. However, it is okay for boys to use rough language, play loudly. Girls are allowed to

show feelings, boys, however, should not cry in most cultures.

Some authors highlight that education or social conditioning can influence gender attitudes in speaking and writing (for example, to make speech more or less politically correct). Women should be more “politically correct” than men.

Language plays a critical role in how we interpret the world, how we think and behave. The words we choose often reflect unconscious assumptions about values, gender roles and the abilities of women and men.

It is now widely accepted that gender in language can reflect sexism. A broad array of language practices has been considered sexist.

Research indicates that men and women socialize differently and, consequently, have diverse styles of speaking and use different words.

Studies that focus on how women and men enact authority in professional positions suggest that linguistically women try to minimize status differences between themselves and their subordinates or patients whereas men tend to use strategies that reinforce status differences.

It has been found that men view conversation as a means to exchange information and to solve problems. Men stay away from personal topics and discuss events, sports, news, and facts. They tell more stories and jokes than women wanting to show their status and power. Men are direct, blunt, and speech includes slang or swears words. Men get straight to work on a task and build relationships while working on the project. Men reflect and process information for decision making internally.

Generally, women avoid using aggressive and threatening language irrespective of their position. They exhibit their subordinate status by being polite and soft spoken. They avoid direct and threatening communication.

## Check your understanding

**1** The term \_\_\_\_\_ refers to society's concept of how men and women are expected to act and how they should behave.

- a) gender bias
- b) sexual attitudes
- c) gender role
- d) sexual orientation

**2** Which of the following is the best example of a gender stereotype?

- a) Women are typically shorter than men.
- b) Men do not live as long as women.
- c) Women tend to be overly emotional, while men tend to be level headed.
- d) Men hold more high-earning, leadership jobs than women.

**3** Only women are affected by gender stratification.

TRUE FALSE

1. C / 2. C / 3. False

ANSWERS



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#### Module 4

## **AGEISM AND SEXISM IN THE LIVES OF OLDER WOMEN**

**HOW DO SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS (GENDER STEREOTYPES, PREJUDICES)  
ABOUT OLDER WOMEN AFFECT THEIR ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, POLITICAL  
SITUATION IN DIFFERENT AREAS OF LIFE?**

**This module is about ageism, stereotypes and prejudices resulting from affective and cognitive processes regarding older women. Stereotypes about older women are mostly negative. They exist on all levels and in all areas of social life impacting the group perceptions and older women's lives. Stereotypes about older people are primitive thinking schemes impacting emotions, cognition and behaviour of older women and relations with older women. On economic level women face social unfairness being less well off than men more at risk of poverty (income gap). Creating stereotypes about women starts particularly early (within fairy tales). When women get old and their reproductive age is over, they mostly become socially invisible.**

## Module in a nutshell

The module consists of three units followed by Check Your understanding and References.

- Unit 1. The negativism of stereotypes and their consequences in older women lives
- Unit 2. The results of lower income in older women's life
- Unit 3. How stereotypes /prejudices affect holistic health of older women
- Check your understanding. Are the following statements True or False?
- References

## Unit 1. The negativism of stereotypes and their consequences in older women's lives

A stereotype can be defined as a belief that certain attributes are characteristic of members of a particular group. Stereotyping occurs when a perceiver infers a preconceived set of traits based on group characteristics, and this may occur quickly and unconsciously, based on limited knowledge of the individual - The use of stereotypes appears to be universal, and stereotype creation starts early. Moreover, life and biologically based stereotypes, like age and gender, are formed earlier and remain stronger than non-

biologically based stereotypes. Age and gender are broad social categories that are generally the first aspects that perceivers notice when meeting a person. Ageing is a highly individualized and complex process; yet it continues to be stereotyped, especially in Western cultures. Stereotypes of ageing in contemporary culture are primarily negative, depicting later life as a time of ill health, loneliness, dependency, and poor physical and mental functioning.

In this context women tend to live longer than men, and thus typically have more interactions with the healthcare system in old age than men do. Ageism and stereotypes of older people in general can have an important impact on older people's physical and mental health and well-being. For example, internalized negative stereotypes can produce self-fulfilling prophecies through stereotype embodiment and contribute to weakness and dependency.

Let's also speak now about mass media. An ongoing study of stereotypes in advertising conducted by media agency UM in association with Credos revealed that almost a third of interviewed women of all ages feel patronised by advertising, but this sentiment is felt most keenly by older women. Older women agree also that "society expects them to vanish from public life as they get older."

Looking specifically at the attitudes of menopausal women, the study found that half don't believe this stage in life has been authentically represented on any channel in popular culture.

And they regard advertising as one of the worst offenders saying ads fail to portray

menopausal women with any sensitivity. Included among the harmful, age-related, female stereotypes are ads that portray them as being out of touch with technology along with more overtly offensive "mumsy/frumsy" and "mutton dressed as lamb" depictions.<sup>1</sup>

Menopausal women attribute the current lack of awareness to a lack of understanding and because people tend not to talk about the menopause. And this might explain why men admit that they're not clear about what it is. Yet importantly for brands, UM said they're missing out on huge, untapped, commercial potential because a quarter of menopausal women say they spend more time and money on fitness, on skincare and holidays.

Not to mention that six out of ten women believe advertising plays a role in challenging stereotypes in society more broadly. Despite some recent powerful and award-winning campaigns, female audiences want more accurate and sympathetic reflections of women like them in all their many roles and in every stage of their lives.

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1. <https://www.warc.com/newsandopinion/news/older-women-feel-stereotyped-in-advertising/41039>

## Unit 2. The results of lower income in older women's life

Europe is ageing. More than 130 million people in the European Union, or about a quarter of the total population, receive a pension. By and large, the national pension systems make sure that older citizens receive a stable income after the end of their working life and are not threatened by poverty. In fact, the risk of being poor in the EU is lower among older people above age 65 as compared to the population below age 65. However, while older people are quite well protected against poverty, there are clear differences between men and women across much of the EU.

Severe inequalities among older people are largely a product of poverty and disadvantage throughout life. Poor education and work opportunities, along with lack of social connections can have long term consequences, often made worse by factors such as reduced income in retirement and the impact of having many long-term health conditions. The often substantial gender gaps in pensions reflect the gender gaps in remuneration, working hours and duration of working lives that women faced during their working lives: pay differences may be rooted in education and skill levels, as well as various forms of gender segregation and discrimination. Household and caring duties

relating to children and frail older relatives fall mostly upon women who experience more career interruptions and part time work than men as a result of it. Finally, the statutory retirement age for women is still lower than that of men in some pension systems, which leads to shorter contributory periods and can result in lower benefits. Moreover, in all Member States, the average pension income of a woman is currently lower than that of a man. At the same time, women tend to live longer than men and so require income for longer periods of time. For the EU as a whole, the average pension of women stood at 60% of the average pension of men.

The only way to modify this situation is to ensure equal opportunities and reduce inequalities of outcome, including measures to eliminate discrimination, and to empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, economic or other status.

"Inequalities accrue and get reinforced over a person's life. They come home to roost in later years, often exacerbating each other and causing greater disadvantage." (Jolly, 2014)

## Unit 3. How stereotypes / prejudices affect holistic health of older women

Health and long-term care represent important settings in relation to old age and ageism as they cover the full pathway of delivery of care related to health and illness that older adults often need to access.

Both positive and negative stereotypes of ageing can have enabling and constraining effects on actions, performance, decisions, attitudes, and, consequently, holistic health of an older adult.

Ageist beliefs and stereotypes can interfere with health care seeking as well as with diagnosis and treatment recommendations; they can, for example, contribute to gender disparities in the health care of older adults if older women are perceived as too frail to undergo aggressive treatments. Ageism also results in disrespectful treatment of older patients, which is communicated through baby talk and other forms of infantilization or the shrugging off of patients' complaints and concerns as "just old age". Intersectional identities can result in a cumulative burden for older women patients who may have a history of disrespectful treatment for other reasons (e.g. sexism, racism, bias against lesbians). Reduction of ageism and sexism

and promotion of more realistic and diverse views of older women could improve doctor–patient relationships, facilitate adherence to treatment, and reduce disparities in health and health care.

Given that, ageism and negative stereotypes about older people are ubiquitous, it is not surprising that healthcare professionals also exhibit them. Studies of physicians show that their attitudes are "complex and mixed" (Meisner, 2012, p. 61). That is, they may express both positive and negative aspects of stereotypes of older people, and their reasons for not liking to work with older people are also complex. Those reasons might have to do with distancing, perhaps as a terror management strategy ('A Terror Management Perspective on Ageism'. Martens, Goldenberg, & Greenberg, 2005), or, in the United States, they might have more to do with economics, given that Medicare reimbursement is less than physicians get from private insurance for the same services (Meisner, 2012). Furthermore, physicians are trained to "cure," and, in general, they prefer to work with patients who have acute illnesses that can be cured, rather than with patients who have chronic illnesses that can only be



managed (often with mixed success) (Taylor, 2012). Research is needed into age, gender, and other disparities in health and health care, with attention to intersectionalities.

Education is needed for both healthcare professionals and older patients. Older people also need education about ageism and stereotypes so that they can recognize and resist them. Positive self-perceptions can benefit physical health and well-being

(an inconvenienced youth? Ageism and its potential intergenerational roots - North & Fiske, 2012) and reduce the likelihood of negative stereotype embodiment. Older women might be especially likely to benefit from assertiveness training and other forms of empowerment. If older women are unafraid to tell their doctors about their symptoms and able to insist upon getting the information they want, the quality of their healthcare might improve.

## Check your understanding

Are the following statements True or False?

- 1 *One of the main factors of and person's poverty is their low educational attainment.*  
TRUE FALSE
- 2 *What makes the gap in pension between men and women is the difference in remuneration.*  
TRUE FALSE
- 3 *Women live longer than men.*  
TRUE FALSE
- 4 *A stereotype is always negative.*  
TRUE FALSE
- 5 *Ageist and sexist stereotypes are getting less popular.*  
TRUE FALSE
- 6 *Stereotypes about older people are never positive.*  
TRUE FALSE
- 7 *Menopausal period for women is well represented by the advertisements.*  
TRUE FALSE
- 8 *Stereotypes both negative and positive affect the holistic life of older people.*  
TRUE FALSE
- 9 *Older people are treated like children by the doctor.*  
TRUE FALSE

6. False / 7. False / 8. False / 9. False  
1. True / 2. True / 3. True / 4. False / 5. False /

ANSWERS

## References

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A portrait of a woman with shoulder-length, straight, pink hair and bangs. She is wearing black-rimmed glasses and has a slight smile. She is wearing a dark blue top with a white floral pattern. The background is dark and out of focus.

Module 5

# **NO SHAME ABOUT OLDER FEMALE BODIES!**

CONSTRUCTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS  
OF THE (OLDER) FEMALE BODY

**The module provides an overview of how gender roles and gender identity are constructed, and how they influence representations of older women in the media and possibly their self-perception. Cultural constructions of age and gender may impact the perception of body. As a cultural tool, media play an important role conveying and amplifying images which may influence the perceptions of older body. Accordingly, this module looks at the multiple ways older women are marginalized in the media and how they are subjected to visual ageism.**

### Module in a nutshell

The module consists of three units followed by Check Your understanding and References.

- Unit 1. Social and cultural construction of (female) gender
- Unit 2. Body image and (Self-)Perception
- Unit 3. Representations of the (older) female body in the media: Visual ageism and the double-marginalization of older women
- Check your understanding. Are the following statements True or False?
- References

## Unit 1. Social and cultural construction of (female) gender

As already discussed in other chapters, 'Gender' is related to social roles based on the biological sex an individual is given in society. In most societies, this is a binary system of 'male' and 'female'. Individuals who do not identify with it or fail to fit into these categories are described as 'non-binary' or 'gender-queer'.

*Gender roles imply certain expectations of what is appropriate and acceptable behaviour for a man or a woman. Or as the European Institute for Gender Equality puts it, gender roles are "social and behavioural norms which, within a specific culture, are widely considered to be socially appropriate for individuals of a specific sex"* (Gender

Roles, 2021). Examples for how gender or gender roles influence behaviour are clothing, professional occupations, and child care.

Gender identity, on the other hand, describes how an individual identifies themselves in terms of gender. 'Femininity' thus offers a cultural description of what it means to be a woman, which may vary widely from an individual's own conceptions and ideas. However, cultural gender roles may also influence a person on a subconscious level so that they are not necessarily aware of them. Depictions of women in the media, both fictional and non-fictional, are not only influenced by these cultural conceptions but

in turn may also influence them to a large degree. Therefore, visibility matters: Visual

representations of female diversity are an important step towards gender equality.

## Unit 2. Body image and (Self-)Perception

*Gender roles are intrinsically linked to representations and perceptions of the body.* Social norms not only dictate behaviour but also what constitutes an 'acceptable' body. Generally, in Western societies, youth is preferred to old age—for both men and women. However, there is the double standard of ageing: Researchers found that across all age groups both men and women are seen as less attractive as they advance in age, but not to the same degree. Women are also seen as less feminine as they get older, while older men's masculinity is perceived as unchanged (Deusch et al.). Also, women are seen as older earlier than men. However, depending on the context, older women might actually be perceived more favourably than older men in relation to traditional gender roles of care takers, nurturers, or generally in social contexts that require a certain emotional warmth (Kornadt et al., 2013, p. np.).

*Cultural constructions of age and gender may influence the individual body image, the way one sees and perceives their own body.* As ageing in many regards is seen as

a negative process (i.e. women become less attractive with age but should be attractive—and therefore young—according to their stereotypical gender role), the body image may change negatively for older women. An extreme form of this is gerontophobia, a strong fear of growing old. But even if one does not experience gerontophobia, many people are subjected to ageism. While ageism may take many forms and be performed on various levels, regarding body image it often appears as pressure to comply with (impossible) beauty standards even in age, and stereotypes about older people (Rocha & Terra, 2014, pp. 258–259).

*While men and women alike have to deal with the challenges of growing older and changing bodies, women are particularly affected by this pressure.* This is important because negative image of one's body can have a negative impact on one's mental and physical health as well as one's well-being. A more diverse visual representation of women of all ages could help.

## Unit 3. Representations of the (older) female body in the media: Visual ageism and the double-marginalization of older women

*Generally speaking, media more often feature men than women.* In films, for example, men have bigger and more significant roles, more speaking time at their disposal. Their physical appearance is less often mentioned. Even after the onset of Me Too-movement, surprisingly few films pass the Bechdel-Test, which asks whether a movie features at least two women with a name who talk to each other about something else than a man.

When it comes to the representation of older women, the situation is even more problematic. Firstly, there is an age gap in casting: While male actors may be cast well into their 40s and 50s in attractive main roles, women over 40 are rarely seen in major roles or on screen at all (Butter, 2015). Bodies of younger women are represented as attractive, while older female bodies basically become invisible. This results in the impression that older people and especially older women are not worthy or interesting enough to appear on screen. The Swedish media researcher Maria Edström calls this a “symbolic annihilation” of older women.

Generally speaking, age is portrayed as negative in the media. Older people are represented as a burden on society. Their health is deteriorating, their competences are diminishing. Edström argues that in TV advertising “positive images, such as ‘the perfect grandparent,’ ‘the adventurous golden ager,’ or ‘the productive golden ager’” appear, but states that these “ideas of ‘successful ageing’ and more positive portrayals can be problematic” as well as they result into even more pressure to comply with society’s expectations.

Both men and women are from a young age under cultural pressure to conform to gender roles, however, with increasing age, the limitations of these gender roles increase alongside the invisibility of older women in the media: Older women are marginalized in the media because they are female and because they are old(er). Women who additionally belong to other marginalized groups (PoC, disabled, religious minorities, etc.) are even less visible. Representation in the media - not only in films but also on TV, in advertisements,

literature, and art - has a major influence on how a person is perceived and how a person perceives themselves.

If represented, older women are often stereotyped as the overbearing and controlling mother, the good housewife, or the oversexed "bitch-witch older woman" who seeks to be forever young. These stereotypes reinforce the impression that older women are of less value to society because they have become less productive or that they hurt the stability of the (young and/or male) system. Although there is a number of older female characters on screen who are depicted as independent, successful, sexually active women, rarely do these depictions actually transcend these stereotypes: Women are still mostly relevant in the private sphere as matriarchs, subject to the male gaze as sexually attractive despite their age, or in the professional world seen as threatening to the male-dominated establishment (Chrisler 2007, 170–71).

But why is this relevant? Representation in the media (not only film but also TV, advertising, literature, and art) has a major influence on a person's perception and self-perception. Rendering older women invisible, unlikeable, and undesirable on screen will influence how older women are (not) seen off screen. It is therefore important not only to critically engage with representations of older women, but also to encourage a more diverse depiction of age, gender roles, and femininity. If you want to improve your own body-image and self-perception, you can make a conscious effort to shed stereotypes. Try to find more realistic depictions of older people and question mainstream media's way of representing older women. Keep in mind that what you are presented with is not what you should understand as 'normal': Ageing is as individual as our bodies and personalities.

## Check your understanding

Are the following statements True or False?

- 1** *Gender and biological sex are the same thing.*

TRUE FALSE

- 2** *Women and men are represented equally in the media.*

TRUE FALSE

- 3** *Women and men are represented equally in the media.*

TRUE FALSE

1. False / 2. False / 3. True

ANSWERS

## References

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## Module 6

# OLDER WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY IN THE PROGRAMMES OF OLDER ADULT EDUCATION

HOW ARE MEN AND WOMEN'S GENDER ROLES AND GENDERED CAPITAL (EXPERIENCES) MIRRORED IN OLDER ADULT EDUCATION AND HOW TO PROGRAM ENGENDERED, CONCEPT-BASED EDUCATION FOR OLDER WOMEN? WHAT ARE THE WAYS OF THINKING, SEEING, AND KNOWING FOR ADULT EDUCATORS?

Gender roles and gender (in)equalities are rarely addressed in educational programmes for older adults, though older men and women get involved in older adult education because they want to belong, to be socially, politically and psychologically empowered. They enter education as representatives of their gender, therefore, their gender capital has to find room in educational programmes. Having said that, there are important differences between being an older male or an older female learner. Generally speaking, being an older woman is considered as cumulative disadvantage (being a woman and being old, being less well off than men, being dependent on men, etc.). It is important to identify gender capital that women bring into education and to design empowering educational programmes for and with them.

## Module in a nutshell

The module consists of three units followed by Check Your understanding and References.

- Unit 1. Approaching women's issues
- Unit 2. Why engendered older adult education
- Unit 3. Programming education for older women
- Check your understanding. Are the following statements True or False?
- References

## Unit 1. Approaching women's issues

With these stories I wanted to open the discourse that makes the reader face taboos related to ageing, I wanted to open up the topics such as weakness, sickness, fear of dying, loss of dignity... This book talks about being lost and insecure in everyday life situations that used to be routine situations. The book was developed slowly, with consciousness about my own ageing, especially after my parents died when I began

to listen to voices around me, voices of older people which I hadn't heard before. Everything is written in stories, from the irreversibility of the process of getting invisible, feeling guilty regarding parents and stories that aren't mine, but made a great impression on me.

Slavenka Drakulić,  
*The invisible woman and other stories*

Some might argue that not only literature but also the field of adult education have been dealing with gender issues for a long time. Women's participation, or lack thereof, in adult education has been explored for decades. Preferences in women's learning styles have been examined. Different social roles have been in focus from the role of mother and spouse, to their professional roles.

Their responsibilities have been in focus as well as the consequences the changes in women's roles have had on women's identities. But women's identities have rarely been examined as such, as being theirs, just theirs and not in relation to men and to their reactions in the same contexts, though, as we have seen before, *older women should know who they are and should be aware that they can grow and can become who they feel they can become*. Nevertheless, studies about older women and the gender capital they bring into adult education have seldom been explored and taken into account while developing an educational programme. In addition, older women do not overtly require more visibility. They adapt themselves. Figuring out how women can overcome this state, struggle for gender equality, and become aware of who they are is a basic task in developing educational programmes for older women.

Focusing on women's situations, you will discover that they are described in relation to men's situations. And you will also discover that women are missing from the data. We can deduce that analyses, theories, research studies or practices are only about half of the population. To illustrate this point, Frederick Gros, a French philosopher, author of the best-selling book *Philosophy of walking*

argues that walking leads to thinking and that many great thinkers in history described their walking as a thinking process (Gros, 2000). He does not mention a single woman, and the reader rightly asks her/himself why there are no women mentioned on the list of great thinkers. The struggle for equity between women and men would bear more fruit if there were data concerning both.

Adult educators repeat that groups of older people are heterogeneous due to their disparate life experiences and reference frameworks. They forget, however, to stress that the heterogeneity of older people is also due to their gender. If data regarding older people, in general, are not important for statistical studies, data of older women seem to be even less so. In the PIAC study, for instance, people over 65 were not addressed by member States, except Germany, which produced an additional study addressing people over the age of 65 and their needs.

There are numerous approaches of women's issues in research and education. The most common one is the oppositional approach, based on biological sex distinctions between men and women. Differences between men and women are often presented as a dichotomy—women opposing men and vice versa. Women are frail and powerless; Men are strong. Gender typing starts early with sentiments that boys should not show emotions, and that girls should behave properly.

This oppositional approach has been intensified by different religions that have analysed and separated the role of women and men. Women and men have had different

economic roles in the field of production, reproduction and consumption. Women are subjected to men politically, economically, pedagogically, and in virtually all ways in which society reflects its power, power that is, with few or no exceptions, invested in men. In *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant writes, to "the natural superiority of the husband to the wife in his capacity to promote the common interest of the household, and mentions the lack of all women's fitness to vote." (Mosser, *Kant and Feminism* by Kurt Mosser, Dayton/Ohio).

Since men and women are not the same, they are defined by many masculine and feminine attributes that need to be acknowledged in older adult education. Women and men should be treated equally. But is it really so? Gender differences are constructed and

deconstructed. Men and women's identities are formed differently. Gender is not stable.

On the contrary, it is rather dynamic, depending on time and space, and the social, political and historic cultural contexts within. Researchers like Hugo, 1990, Lewis, 1988, Stalker, 2005 refer to Belenky et al. (1986) arguing that women are unique but absent from research studies, and attention should be devoted to them. Other research argues that women and men are both complex and diverse categories. Dichotomous approach functions differently in different contexts. In patriarchal contexts, there is a definition of men's values, abilities and actions and women's values, abilities and actions as deficient, relative to men. As a result, stories, experiences and knowledge of all women are needed in order to achieve their genuine empowerment.

## Unit 2. Why engendered older adult education

*Consolidating women's identity, increasing women's understanding themselves, encouraging women's taking decisions about themselves, alleviating stereotypes about older women and discrimination of older women, dismantling prejudices is a path the education paves towards gender equality.*

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 since all groups of older people, and particularly groups of older women, tend to be pushed to the edge of society. Therefore, educators/ mentors, are concerned with achieving a better understanding of what gendered old age in contemporary European society is and could be. Adult educators need knowledge about age specific issues and also gender specific issues.

They will first gain theoretical insight into these issues and will delineate situations in which gender equality is achieved or not. These themes will be at the core of the educational programmes for and about older women. They will include women's right to explore their identity, and to not be considered

as more or less than men, as is the case in patriarchal societies. In general, patriarchy bestows upon men better abilities and qualities than women.

In these societies, women exist as good wives and mothers, as persons taking care of everybody's comfort, but they do not exist for themselves. Like other socially marginalized groups, women rarely know what they could become and do not consider themselves as rights holders. Their human values are close to basic European values.

Social roles (a concept determining one's social identity) are taken on, left behind, or lost throughout life. Older women and older men lose many roles, but they can take on some new ones. An increase in women's social roles means more possibilities for their personal growth. Social roles require older women's commitment. The greater an older woman's commitment, the better is her capacity to learn, be independent and active. Her knowledge and abilities grow, her interests widen and she is able to take on more complex responsibilities. A woman with more social roles will also be better ready to help herself and others. And all of this will result in a positive and well-formed identity.

## Unit 3. Unit 3. Programming education for older women

Educators/mentors of older learners cannot focus only on their subjects or topics, their disciplinary knowledge, the methods to use, etc., but have to bear in mind that education of older people is also about the empowerment of older people, men and women. Older female learners should change their attitude towards themselves as older women and old age in general by developing relevant standpoints. It can be said that older adult education is transformative for both sides, educators and participants. It should also raise awareness of the general public about who older women are, about their values and rights, about their identity, their gendered experiences they bring into older adult education. To be socially transformative, education of older people is accompanied by public campaigning.

For different reasons older women are not a homogeneous group, there are huge differences within a group and among groups of older women. To begin with, they are older workers, older women facing retirement, older women after retirement and after the professional working life phase, etc... Hence, from both an individual and societal perspective, it is important to promote educational activities of all groups of older women.

*Older adult education programmes cannot be just adapted to the perceived needs of older learners.*

They have to be customized and mostly built from scratch. To be exact, draft programmes are built, the goals are set, methods are selected, etc. but contents depend on the needs, interests, wishes, aspirations of the learning group members. They depend on the time and space and culture of the environment. But there should also be a hidden or less hidden agenda with contents empowering older female learners taking in account their values and gender capital they bring to education. To illustrate this point, in a group of English learners grand parenting was discussed based on a compilation of facts from research studies. Grandparents, grandmothers discovered that they have to put their health first as not to suffer from grandparents' burn out. History of Rosa Luxembourg in comparison with Danica and Angela Vode, Slovenian feminists were discussed. Relationships in family after they got retired and prejudices concerning older women were examined. A visit was paid to the Zagreb Women's Studies Centre, etc., the movement Me Too was on the agenda. The performance Oldies (Slov. Starci)

with non-actors real older people, was attended... discussion followed. The insulting declarations of some politicians concerning women were identified and reacted to by writing a collective letter to the editor of a magazine. Stereotypes about older women were identified by the learners and discussed.

### How to design an older adult education programme

*Planning the implementation and programming the contents of an educational programme are needed to achieve coherence among the various elements of the programme.*

- (1) In the past programming was thought of as anticipating the steps to be taken in order to achieve goals. The main programming strategy was goal oriented.
- (2) A discussion started on how to adapt the goals in dialogue with the participants. As long as only goals were important, the structure of

adult education programmes was clear.

- (3) Later adaptation of goals and finding equilibrium of often opposed needs started taking place.

(4) In the past focus was on structured contents and methods.

(5) Nowadays focus has been shifted to identifying the needs.

(6) An educational programme for older adults and older women is understood as a dynamic process dealing with knowledge and skills, of course, but also values, attitudes towards learning, the impact of social and cultural circumstances.

Programming contents and planning delivery does not follow a single methodology with a linear development. Instead, programming contents and planning delivery of an educational programme for older adults is a rather creative, innovative process (where trial and error learning is present as well). Different methods, models and approaches are used.



## Check your understanding

Are the following statements True or False?

- 1** *Groups of older women are highly heterogeneous.*

TRUE FALSE

- 2** *Programmes in older adult education can be adapted programmes.*

TRUE FALSE

- 3** *Programmes in older adult education can be simply goal oriented.*

TRUE FALSE

ANSWERS

1. True / 2. False / 3. False

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## Module 7

# ICT METHODS FOR GENDER EQUALITY

INTERACTIVE METHODS IN ENGENDERED EDUCATION OF OLDER WOMEN – METHODS OF DELIVERY

This module is a demonstration of how to use new technologies, ICT skills and learning methods in older women's education.

### Module in a nutshell

The module consists of three units followed by Check Your understanding and References.

- Unit 1. Digitizing interactive face-to face learning methods: ICT methods in education
- Unit 2. Gender equality and ICT
- Unit 3. ICT and education for (older) women
- Check your understanding. Are the following statements True or False?
- References

## Unit 1. Digitizing interactive face-to face learning methods: ICT methods in education

*Face-to-face learning is a teaching/ learning method where course contents are transmitted to learners and the group members' learning is triggered to create new knowledge.* This ensures live interaction between adult learners themselves and the educator. *Face-to-face learning* is a traditional type of learning. Adult learners benefit from a greater level of interaction with their counterparts in the study group. Face-to-face learning gives group members *the opportunity to bond with each other.* Such methods are for example: *collaborative learning, exploratory learning, group projects, role-playing, games, simulations, debates, group discussion, etc.*

These methods are rather useful in adult learning and education. However, in the digital

age and since the onset of the Covid-19 health crisis, it has become more and more important to adjust these learning methods by using new technologies.<sup>2</sup> Now, you are probably wondering how to proceed with the digitization/digitalization of these interactive learning methods?

This can be done through *blended learning*,<sup>3</sup> or *multimodal learning*, an approach that combines face-to-face education/training/ learning with online learning activities, while focusing on the learner's experience.

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2. Eva Andersson, [ICT in adult education](#)

3. From, [Blended Learning for Adult Educators](#)

Activities	Face-to-face approach	Blended learning or combined/multimodal learning
Adult learners are involved in project learning	Adult learners meet in a study room to work together and contribute to the project.	Adult learners use online messengers and community, as well as task managers to plan their work and track their progress. They also use file sharing services (e.g Google docs) to collaborate and share feedback on the project progress.
Adult learners practice conversation in a foreign language in pairs or small groups.	Adult learner are divided into sub-groups during a session, and they discuss a topic.	In addition to group discussions, adult learners use online text and voice services (e.g. chat, Facebook group).
Adult learners practice debates	Adult learners watch a video in their learning group and discuss what they have understood.	Activity statistics are used to track adult learners' progress. They take online quizzes and tests, submit digital materials, and participate in cross-evaluations with each other.
Evaluation	Adult learners complete written assignments and take mid-course and terminal (final) tests.	Activity statistics are used to track adult learners' progress. They take online quizzes and tests, submit digital materials, and participate in cross-evaluations with each other.

Unlike exclusively online courses, the online part of the blended course does not completely replace face-to-face education/training/learning with an educator or learning

facilitator. He or she incorporates technology in the learning process as to enhance the learning experience and expand the understanding of some topics.

## Unit 2. Gender equality and ICT

According to ITU “In 2019, the share of women using the Internet worldwide amounted to **48%**, as compared to **58% of men**”<sup>4</sup> The *gender gap* has been shrinking in Europe while in the Arab States, Asia, the Pacific, and Africa, the gender gap has been growing. Since 2013 there have been more male than female new internet users.

Moreover, the “ICT Gender equality paradox”<sup>5</sup> has been brought to light. Countries that are much better than other countries at achieving overall gender equality, such as European countries, have the fewest women acquiring the advanced skills needed for careers in the technology sector. Currently, only around **17%** of the almost **8 million** ICT specialists in Europe are women. This paradox reveals the need for measures to encourage inclusion of women<sup>6</sup> in digital skills training, notwithstanding their age.

It has also become obvious that ICT have led to the creation of jobs for both men and women (according to the UNESCO document named ITC and Gender).<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the information economy goes on reproducing forms of gender segregation, with men high-skilled, high-value-added jobs, while women remain concentrated in unskilled, low value-added sectors.

On the other hand, ICT skills are also tools for *social transformation and promotion of equality*.

Let us consider some examples:

- In many places, NGOs are testing e-commerce initiatives that link via Internet craftswomen directly to global markets. NGOs support their activities by providing the market and production information to them. For example WTOF<sup>8</sup> (World Fair Trade Organization), supports marginalised small producers while **74% of them are female** farmers and craftswomen.
- Governments have initiated e-governance programs that use ICT to provide citizens with a better electronic access to government services, accompanied, in some cases, by an explicit strategy to ensure effective access for women and those who face difficulties in accessing these services. For example, in Denmark, in Portugal<sup>9</sup> in UK or in Estonia <sup>10</sup>
- Health educators use radio broadcasting to disseminate information on women's sexual and reproductive health in some countries. On the radio France Inter<sup>11</sup> are broadcast programmes dealing with the female sexuality and related society's cultural imperatives.

In addition, today's social networks are a powerful tool used in the struggle against gender inequality<sup>12</sup>. They allow the sharing of information and liberate the voice of women due to the emergence of social movements such as the "Me Too". This movement focused on sexual abuse in America, has expanded into all gender issues and sexual abuse in society as a whole. This keyword has spread throughout Europe applying to inequalities and abuses of women in various professional environments, from fun or cultural industries to sports and politics.

These studies show that although ICT is now well established in Europe, tools are not yet reaching men and women equally. There is still a need to promote their use and creation of the associated value through education and training. It is essential to

address the entire population, and more specifically older women, who traditionally are the most vulnerable concerning gender equality issues. The use of new technologies and ICT is urgently needed in older women's education in order to empower them and move them closer to the social mainstream.

4. From ITU, International Telecommunication Union, [Bridging the gender divide](#), 2019
5. From UNESCO, [ICT Gender paradox](#)
6. From EIGE, [Women in ICT sector](#)
7. From UNESCO, [ICT and Gender](#)
8. From, [WTFO website](#)
9. The Portugal Plan, in [ICT for Elderly People: "Yes, They' Can!"](#)
10. [The underlying causes of the digital gender gap and possible solutions for enhanced digital inclusion of women and girls](#)
11. [France inter](#)
12. [Les femmes à l'assaut du numérique](#)

## Unit 3. ICT and education for (older) women

From their appearance in the 50s with the automation of tasks, to the democratization of the Internet, new technologies have considerably changed society and the work environment. They have constantly created new ways of doing things. As a result of it, many jobs have gradually disappeared and new tasks requiring specific skills have emerged. Today more than ever, it is important for adults to learn continuously

in order to upgrade their professional skills, learn new skills and be able to remain socially integrated and active.

The study conducted in the communication document named "Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning<sup>13</sup> a Reality", published by the European Commission and Council Resolution on Lifelong Learning, have highlighted the importance of lifelong learning

for competitiveness and employability, but also for social inclusion, active citizenship and personal growth. This is even more true regarding older people and older women who are often excluded from society because of their lack of education and training.

For older women, *organized learning* is a way to get out of their daily routines of housewives or retirees and find a new career path.

Several organizations have emerged to take up the challenge of reaching out to the least qualified older people as to train them to face current and future digital transformations.

For example:

- **Silver geek:**<sup>14</sup> is the result of a collective dynamics in Poitou-Charentes (France) initiated back in 2014, which has made digital technology available to older people. The project aims to break the isolation of older people and promotes intergenerational social bonds. Since then entertaining digital workshops have been led by a hundred or so civic service volunteers. They are offered every week using the facilities of organizations for older people or of older people or community centres. In the workshops tablets and game consoles have been used.
- **Old'up:**<sup>15</sup> develops actions for older learning audience that include 2 older generations

from 70 to over 90 years of age. Actions take place in nursery homes and residential homes as well as within the network of public nursery homes. In 2019, Old Up launched an experimental project concerning the use of digital tablets by nonagenarians.

This has been made possible through different digital learning approaches:

- **Edutainment:** a blend of educational material and entertainment (ex: escape game, serious game).
- **Mooc:** an open type of distance learning that can address many participants.
- **Numerical simulations:** Virtual simulations, also called screen-based simulations, are a recreation of reality depicted on a computer screen. It is focused on humans by exercising their motor skills, decision making skills, or communication skills by using adequate software and virtual reality.

With access to the Internet and ICT skills women, older women included, have the opportunity to start their own businesses, sell their products on new markets, find better-paying jobs, and access education, health and financial services. This also aims to struggle against gender inequalities.

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13. From DDV International, [Adult Education and Development](#)

14. [Silver geek website](#)

15. [Old'up website](#)



## Check your understanding

Are the following statements True or False?

- 1 *It is important to give older people access to the digital tools, ensuring that particularly older women participate in continuous ICT training notwithstanding their advanced age.*
- 2 *ICT cannot be used to promote gender equality.*
- 3 *Women are more independent when they use internet for business, but this does not improve their equality with men.*

TRUE FALSE

TRUE FALSE

TRUE FALSE

1. True / 2. False / 3. False

ANSWERS

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<https://www.lifeline24.co.uk/technology-for-older-people/>

Annex 1

# LIFE STORIES OF BELITTLED WOMEN

## Annex 1

**WHO ARE BELITTLED OR  
FORGOTTEN WOMEN OF PAST AND  
PRESENT IN EU COUNTRIES WHOSE  
LIVES MIGHT BE SOURCE OF  
LEARNING ABOUT WOMEN**

# Introduction

Stories about exceptional forgotten women from the past and present times, different historical periods and cultural backgrounds are all instructive. Generalisations are possible on the basis of these though different stories and a lot can be learnt from these women's lives. The stories make it possible to understand the relationships of power within societies and social contexts. We learn about the personal power, social or religious dominance of these women, and above all we can deduce that women, when they were supported, were given good education mostly upon their fathers' initiative and due to their fathers' open mind, education and passion to discover and change. Rebellious fathers »created« rebellious daughters, open-minded and liberal fathers made their daughters liberal and open-minded. That is understandable, since men were role models, not women, and daughters were respectful of their fathers' image. Daughters obviously could look up to their father and husband and identify with them.

On the other hand, women started paving their way to success in quite traditional ways. Being allowed to be pleasant, good at conversation and entertaining, speaking several languages and playing musical

instruments, practicing the arts in privacy, they came closer to those in power, the Court for instance and became more powerful while they were both respecting and avoiding convenience and social rules. Not many were overtly socially and professionally active in opposing obstacles raised against them, such as education that was not accessible, sports, especially cycling, that were immoral for women, and limited access to professional work.

It appears that struggling socially for women's rights was born when civic society was born. It could be said that there are parallels between civic society and the commitment to women's rights. Moreover, these stories make us understand that EU values women's and human rights: the right to assembly, the right to freedom, the right to expression, the right to work together, the right to achieve. Civil rights are embodied in women's rights today and that is how many women, without realizing it, use their human rights—their civil rights effectively. These rights are not granted once forever. Instead, they are constantly in danger in our times of political, economic and sanitary crisis. We must always be aware of this danger, lest we lose the rights that women have gained.

Romania

**SOFIA  
IONESCU-OGREZEANU**

(25th of April 1920 – 21th of March  
2008)

**Achievements:**

- The first female neurosurgeon in the world.
- Innovator of brain surgery techniques that become breakthrough knowledge in the field of neurosurgery.



Image Source: <https://www.eans.org/page/SofiaIonescu-Ogrezeanu-Bio>

Sofia OGREZEANU was born in Fălticeni, Suceava (Eastern part of Romania), to the Ogrezeanu family. Her father, Constantin Ogrezeanu, worked as a bank clerk and had been married before. After the death of his young daughter from his first marriage, he divorced and moved from Bucharest to Fălticeni to get away from the sadness of losing his child. Her mother, Maria Șincai, a housewife 25 years younger than her father, was originally from Bucovina, the northern part of the country. She was named Sofia, which means “wisdom” in Greek, and Gherghina—a synonym for the Dahlia flower. Both her names described personality characteristics manifested all her life. She had a sister with four years younger than her.

She attended the primary school and then the “High-school for Girls” in her hometown. When she was 13 years old, she went with her sister to spend a holiday with their maternal grandparents. Because of a very early morning train they needed to catch, their father caringly woke them up with a song and offered them each a rose from the small garden in front of the home. It was going to be the last memory of him, because he dies while the sisters are away. From that moment on, she gets closer to the family of her schoolmate and friend, Aurelia Dumitriu, whose father, Vasile Dumitriu, was a physician and “a kind person and caring doctor”, as she describes him. He becomes a role model for her, somehow replacing the void left by the death of her

own father and, thus her interest for medicine school is ignited.

Later on, she feels mistreated at school, so she asks her mother to send her to “the best school there is”, so she goes to Bucharest for the last two years of high school, attending the Central School for Girls “Marica Brâncoveanu”. Encouraged by her deep mercy for people’s suffering and by her conviction that she can help them, she wishes to apply to the Human Medicine Faculty in Bucharest, but she is opposed by her Tutelary Commission (composed of a lawyer, her mother and other relatives). According to the law at that time, widows did not have complete decision-making rights over the children. Her mother fights for Sofia’s wish and finally prevails, so she starts studying medicine in 1939.

During the summer break in 1942, she takes care of the wounded soldiers in a war hospital organized in her hometown Fălticeni. In February 1943, while still in school, she competes for an ophthalmology externship at “Professor Doctor Cantacuzino” Hospital in Bucharest, which she gets. During the summer break in 1943, she works as a physician in a rural clinic in Baia, Suceava County.

In November 1943, she starts an internship at the Neurosurgery Service of the Hospital No. 9 in Bucharest, joining the first team of Romanian neurosurgeons, coordinated by Professor Dr Dimitrie Bagdasar – considered to be the founder of Romanian neurosurgery. The other members of the team were Constantin Arseni and Ionel Ionescu, her future husband.

In 1944, during World War II, a child with head wounds from a bombing incident is brought to the hospital. Professor Bagdasar has a hand injury and cannot perform the surgery. The other team members also face impediments to enter into surgery. The child is at risk of dying, so Sofia, even though she is still a 5th year student, offers to perform the surgery—one that would change her life. The surgery is a success and offers Professor Bagdasar a good proof of her skills, so he invites her to stay on the team and specialize in Neurosurgery.

She receives her degree in medicine in January 1945.

She gets married in 1945 to Ionel Ionescu, her neurosurgery colleague, becoming Sofia Ionescu-Ogrezeanu. The years to follow are full of concern and joy, working relentlessly (from 5 o’clock in the morning) to succeed in a profession dominated by men (until 1989, in Romania there were only 8 female neurosurgeons). She takes all the exams to reach the highest distinction in the medical field and becomes one of the best minds in her field.

The great neurosurgical adventure began in 1944 and lasts 47 years as a successful career. She even develops her own surgical techniques that are to be recognized later as breakthrough knowledge in her field. She has authored over 120 scientific articles, published and republished in scientific journals all over the world: *Acta Chirurgica Belgica*, *Journal of Surgery*, *Neurology*, *Psychiatry*, *Neurosurgery*, *Revue Roumaine d’Endocrinologie*.

The wide recognition of her merits only comes years after her retirement. For her valuable contribution to clinical and scientific development of Neurosurgery in Romania and also for the professional support offered for the training Neurosurgery interns, Dr Sofia Ionescu was named as honorary member of the Romanian Academy of Medical Sciences in 1997. In 2005, at the International Congress of Female Neurosurgeons, she received credits for being the first female neurosurgeon in the world and for the innovative surgery

procedures that helped develop the field of Neurosurgery.

She died in 2008. She is now seen as opening the gates for the other female neurosurgeons that followed in her footsteps throughout the world.

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## Romania

**SARMIZA BILCESCU**

(27th of April 1867 – 26th of August 1935)

**Achievements:**

- The first European woman ever to obtain a license in Law;
- The first woman in the world with a Ph.D. in Law (from the University of Paris);
- The first European woman ever admitted in a Bar Association (former Ilfov Bar Association, now Bucharest Bar Association in Romania);
- Founder of “The Society of Romanian Young Ladies”, one of the first feminist associations in Romania;
- Member in several feminist associations throughout the world.



Image Source: [https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarmiza\\_Bilcescu-Alim%C4%83ni%C8%99teanu](https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarmiza_Bilcescu-Alim%C4%83ni%C8%99teanu)

Sarmiza BILCESCU was born in Bucharest, in a well-positioned family. Her father, Dumitru Bilcescu, was Chief of Finance Control, co-founder of the Romanian National Bank and a close friend to several prominent Romanian politicians of that time. Her mother, Maria Georgian, was very passionate about art and literature and encouraged her daughter in pursuing high education. Both her parents were animated by the idea of preserving and promoting the Romanian values and identity and that is why Sarmiza was named after a famous Dacian fortress, Sarmisegetuza.

Miza, as she was called by her family and close friends, was a tomboy during her childhood and liked to spend time outside. Until the age of seven, she was educated by her mother and by a severe private tutor, Vasile Păun. Afterwards she attended different schools and was taught by significant scholars of the time, including Spiru Haret and Frédéric Damé. Having also a passion for art and especially for music, she took piano lessons from the notorious teacher and composer Eduard Wachmann. In 1884, at the age of 17, she enlists with no difficulty at the Faculty

of Letters of Univeristy of Paris – which had started to accept female students in 1871 (after the first female student ever accepted at Sorbonne University, by the Faculty of Sciences, had already been enlisted in 1867), but she returns home just 6 weeks after that because of a cholera epidemic which had started in Paris around that time. Meanwhile, her father, driven by the desire of having his daughter better manage her significant estate, convinces her to prepare for a career in Law, so she returns to Paris – accompanied by her mother who will stay with her throughout all her study years – and files for being accepted at the Faculty of Law. Despite the fact that in the United States of America (Iowa), women started to practice Law in 1869, France and a great part of Europe was still reluctant to accept women as equal intellectuals to men.

In December 1884 she takes her acceptance exam at the Faculty of Law at the Sorbonne University and the deliberations take two weeks. Edmond Louis Armand Colmet De Santerre, the professor of Civil Law, admits: “We hesitated to award Miss Bilcescu the authorization she demanded, fearing that we would have to police the amphitheatres.” While waiting for the answer on the hallways for days in a row, Sarmiza’s mother meets A. E. Pichard, the secretary of the Faculty of Law, and says to him: “I come from a distant foreign country, but they don’t argue there the women’s right to get an education. How is it possible, sir, that in a country in which even above the prison gates lays written «Liberty, Equality and Fraternity», you are preventing a woman to get educated?”. The secretary finds the argument really compelling and retells

the discussion to the Faculty Council. Finally Sarmiza gets admitted, but the struggle is not over: after acceptance she is invited to get out of the classroom by professor Paul Souday, who yells: “Without women!... Science is made among men!” and she is prevented to enter the university building by the doorman several months later.

Things change when she has her first exam. She will recall later: “The professors are reluctant to look at me. One of them asks a difficult question. I answer. The professor insists. (...) I start then to detail everything, I analyze exceptions, I speak for about a quarter of an hour. The faces of the professors get lit up: «Well done, miss, very well.» The exam continues for almost three quarters of an hour and then it is over. I get out of the room. After two minutes the doorman invites me back into the exam room. (...) From that moment on the professors held for me that consideration that is reserved only for the elite!” After completing her first year of studies, Colmet De Santerre addressed the student body, mentioning Bilcescu’s “relentlessness beyond all praise and exemplary conduct” and thanking male students for having “welcomed her as a sister”; the speech was received with applause by the audience. She takes her degree in Juridical Sciences in 1887.

While in Paris, she continues to take music lessons from the notorious professor Antoine François Marmontel.

On 12th of June 1890, at the age of 23, Sarmiza Bilcescu makes history, becoming the world’s first woman with a doctorate

in Law. Newspapers from all around the world (Europe, Australia, United States of America) covered her story. The subject of her 506-paged Ph.D. thesis is "About the Legal Condition of the Mother in Romanian and French Law", in which she promotes the equality of women and men within the institution of marriage and in sharing the rights over their children.

Once returned in Romania, in the autumn of 1890, Sarmiza Bilcescu applies for the license to practice Law at the Bar Association in Ilfov County (which, at the time, also included Bucharest) and the Council of Lawyers grants her the license by arguing that "There is nothing standing against the petitioner's request to be enlisted as a lawyer."

No woman has managed to obtain a license to practice Law in Europe before her. Nevertheless, she never pleaded in court, because mentalities were difficult to change and the potential clients did not really trust a woman lawyer, but she paid all the fees regularly throughout the years and she offered juridical council to whomever requested it, sometimes even pro bono.

On 18th of March 1894 she establishes "The Society of Romanian Young Ladies", focused on promoting the cultural unity of the Romanian people (Romania hadn't unified all its territories at that time) and on supporting women to reach higher education levels.

In 1897 she marries Constantin Alimănișteanu, considered to be "the most distinguished engineer of the mines", which supports her in her community work until his death, in 1911. In 1898, Sarmiza Bilcescu-Alimănișteanu becomes the mother of a boy which she

adored, named Dumitru, after her father.

Around this period she becomes a jury of the Cooperative Exhibition, sponsored by the royal family in Romania and she befriends Queen Mary of Romania, to whom she gives lessons of Romanian and with whom she later on gives piano concerts.

She was an active militant for the preservation of Romanian heritage and cultural traditions and an important promoter of Romania's image abroad. She was involved in establishing dorms and school canteens for Law students, but she also offered her support to other projects involving children's education.

In 1909 she establishes a school in the rural area of one of her estates, which still wears the name of her father, Dumitru Bilcescu. She offers private scholarships from her own money to poor students that want to study abroad.

She was president of the Federation of University Women. She presided several charity balls. She was invited to take part in many feminist societies all over the world: The Advisory Board of Women's Branch of the World's Congress Auxiliary on Government Reform, Queen Isabella Association, Société des Amis de l'Université de Paris, International Congress of Women.

She dies in 1935 of septicemia, caused by a liver infection. Even though her career as a lawyer never bloomed, she managed to make a career out of being socially involved in developing the community and she became a role model and a road opener for women aspiring to a higher level of education.

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## Spain

## ELENA MASERAS

(25th of May 1853 - 4th of December 1905)

## Achievements:

- The first woman to study medicine in the university of Barcelona



Image Source: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9c/Elena\\_Maseras.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9c/Elena_Maseras.jpg)

Nowadays, women outnumber men in universities: 58 percent of those enrolled are women. This data do not surprise us now, but getting here has not been easy. As in many other spheres, women did not have a free pass to the University until a little over a century ago.

Since its origins, university classrooms only welcomed men, but in the face of the struggle of women for equality, already in the middle of the 19th century, some European universities decided to accept women in all university studies on equal terms with men. The universities of Paris and Zurich were the pioneers.

Despite the prohibitions, some women managed to sneak into classrooms, even if

they had to do so dressed as men (Concepción Arenal).

Elena Maseras, born in 1853 in Vilaseca, Spain, did not want to go through disguise to enrol in the University of Barcelona. Raised in a family of doctors, since her childhood she felt very attracted to medicine and decided to follow in her family's footsteps. She longed for studying Medicine in the times when university was closed for women. Despite of the great challenges, she finished her Bachelor of Arts.

After requesting to enrol in the University, the King of Spain, Amadeo de Saboya, granted her a Royal Order in 1872 that allowed her to enrol to study Medicine at the University of Barcelona.

That permission allowed Elena to pursue the degree on a private basis, but did not empower her to attend classes. In 1875, Professor Narciso Carbón admitted her to his classroom and that's how she could take face-to face classes. Despite being well received by her male companions, Elena could not sit beside them; she had to occupy a special seat on the platform next to the teacher.

In 1878, she concluded her studies and requested to take the licensure exam. The Ministry of Public Instruction took just over 3 years to grant her permission. Tired of these bureaucratic obstacles, Elena Maseras decided to redirect her career towards teaching, working as a teacher in a town of Villanueva and Geltrú (Catalonia) and later in Mahón (Menorca) where she taught at the first public school for girls.

At the same time as a teacher, Elena also wrote for a Republican and Democratic newspaper called "El Pueblo". Her articles covered health, culture, and leisure topics.

Meanwhile, small steps were taken for the integration of women in the university world. Thus, in 1888, the entry of women into the University as private students was admitted,

but it required the authorization of the Council of Ministers for their registration as official students.

Only on March 8, 1910, through a Royal Order of the Ministry of Public Instruction, women enrolment was authorized under the same conditions as men: without special permits and allowed to attend classes. In addition, a few months later the qualification for professional practice was recognized. During the first year, 21 women enrolled in the university.

Elena Maseras could not be a witness to it; she had died five years earlier. She was only 52 years old, but her name occupies a place of honour among the brave women who fought for equality between men and women.

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## Spain

## JUANA THE MAD

(6th of November 1479 – 12th of April 1555)



Image Source: [https://www.nationalgeographic.com/es/medio/2015/07/30/140\\_juana\\_1\\_1250x2000.jpg](https://www.nationalgeographic.com/es/medio/2015/07/30/140_juana_1_1250x2000.jpg)

Juana of Castile was also known as Juana La Loca or 'Juana the Mad.' She was the older sister of Catherine of Aragon, who was the queen of England during her marriage to Henry VIII of England. Juana married Philip the Handsome when she was 16 and had six children.

Juana was smart and had a high level of education. She was fluent in Castilian, Leonese, Galician-Portuguese, Catalan and French and Latin. She enjoyed hunting and hawking, dancing and playing a variety of instruments, including the clavichord, the guitar and the monochord.

She also began to question the catholic faith while she was in her teens, and her mother,

Queen Isabella I, reportedly tortured her as a punishment for her scepticism, which isn't surprising if you remember one of Isabella's greatest life achievements—the Inquisition.

She was thrust to the front of the line to the throne when many of her family members died. Her brother Juan died, leaving no living children, and Juana's sister Isabella died after giving birth to her son Miquel, who soon died on his second birthday.

This all meant that Juana was the Princess of Asturias and heir to the throne of Castile. When her mother, Isabella I of Castile died in 1504, Juana took the throne of Castile and Leon, and then she inherited the Kingdom of Aragon when her father died in 1517.



**So why was she nicknamed ‘Mad’?**

In 1504, she began to show signs of mental instability. (A psychologist might read a bit more into the fact that she began to experience mental problems the same year that her mother, both a source of love and intense pain, passed away.)

Juana had trouble sleeping and eating, and she always wanted to join her husband in his travels. When she was prevented from doing so, she would become enraged.

Another source of anger for Juana was whenever she discovered that her husband had taken yet another mistress.

The most notorious of her outbursts was when her husband died, and she travelled with his body from Burgos to Granada while she was pregnant. Upon arrival, she opened her husband's casket to hug and kiss him.

Before his death, Philip spread rumours about Juana's insanity, potentially blowing them out of proportion. Juana's son Charles became the Holy Roman Emperor and sent Juana to a convent where she would serve out the rest of her life until she died at age 75.

That ended the long and tragic life of 'Juana la Loca'. She certainly earned her nickname—after all, she was depressed when her family members died, and she suffered from intense jealousy every time her husband cheated on her. And don't forget her emotional breakdown when her husband passed. For surely only a truly deranged woman would dare show such emotion.

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## Portugal

CAROLINA BEATRIZ  
ÂNGELO

(16th of April 1878 – 3rd of October 1911)



Image Source: <https://www.parlamento.pt/Parlamento/Paginas/Carolina-Beatriz-Angelo.aspx>

Beatriz Ângelo's life was a pioneering one on several fronts: she was part of the first group of women to defend equal rights and duties for men and women; she was the first woman in Western Europe to vote; she was the first woman to perform surgery and was the first Portuguese feminist, and the only one of her time, to advocate compulsory military service for women.

She was born in Guarda, a country town in Portugal. She earned her degree in medicine in 1902 to become the second woman Portuguese doctor. In the same year, Carolina Beatriz Ângelo was the first Portuguese doctor to perform surgery at the Hospital de S. José in Lisbon, under the guidance of Miguel Bombarda, doctor, scientist, professor and republican, a leading figure at that time. From

1906 on Carolina participated in committees and associations linked to republican ideas. She was a member of Freemasonry and a founder of Women's Studies. She became the leader of the Republican League of Portuguese Women, having sewn together with Adelaide the flag of the Republic raised on October 5th in 1910. Till that year, Portugal was a monarchy. On May 28th 1911, the first elections in Portugal took place, to constitute the National Assembly. Carolina immediately registered herself as a voter after having studied the law, which had just been formulated on the basis of the revolutionary ideas. In that law, she found no explicit reference to the sex of the voters. She was refused the right to vote. So, she took the case to the court twice, claiming her rights. She won the case, arguing that the electoral code

attributed the right to vote to “all Portuguese over the age of twenty-one, who on May the 1st” (1911), were “resident on the national territory”, who knew to “read and write” and were “head of the household”. Well, she was a Portuguese citizen, widow and a mother—head of the family, and she even knew how to read and write. She was also a gynaecologist. On the appointed day, accompanied by ten companions from the Feminist Propaganda Association who wanted to witness first-hand, Carolina Beatriz ngelo went to vote. A crowd of onlookers awaited them at the door of Clube Estefânia, in such a way that police volunteers

decided to guard the place as well as the journalists who, at nine o'clock in the morning, were already there. That was a moment not to miss. When Carolina arrived, they would not let her in. Only men were allowed to vote. Nevertheless, Carolina voted, thus becoming the first female voter of Portugal and Western Europe. Politics was a male matter. She died a few months later at the age of only 33. Three years later, the legislators of the new-born Portuguese Republic changed the law excluding women from the right to vote. It took 63 years and a revolution to declare universal suffrage in Portugal.

## Portugal

## ADELAIDE CABETE

(25th of January 1867 - 14th of September 1935)



Image Source: <https://shethoughtit.ilcml.com/biography/adelaide-cabete/>

Adelaide de Jesus Damas Brazão was born in Alcáçovas, a country town bordering with Spain. She was born in a working class family. She got married at the age of 18 with a man aged 36, Manuel Ramos Fernandes Cabete, a self-taught sergeant, a Latin and Greek tutor, who encouraged and accompanied her in her studies. Adelaide completed primary school at the age of 22, finished grammar school at the age of 29 and graduated in medicine when she was 33.

The protection of poor pregnant women as a means of promoting the physical development of new generations», was the title of her degree thesis. Adelaide proposed the formulation of the law that would allow female workers to rest during the last month

of pregnancy, receiving a subsidy. She also proposed the creation of maternity wards, day care centres, children's homes, institutions of social solidarity. She promoted the first abolitionist congresses on prostitution, and organized in Portugal the famous Leagues of Kindness, a voluntary work of social assistance directed by women.

Politically, she was a committed republican, convinced and feminist, she developed intense militant activity in favour of the establishment of that political regime and for the dignification of the women's status. In 1909 she participated in the founding of the Republican League of Portuguese Women. The organisation split in May 1911 giving birth to the Association of Feminist Propaganda

in Portugal (1911-1918) which was of a Masonic nature. She participated in the Gant Feminist Congress (1913) and was a member of the National Council of Portuguese Women (CNMP), the most enduring feminist organization in the 20th century (1914-1947), in Portugal. She was also president of the National Women's Crusade, the result of the mobilization of Republicans with the declaration of the state of war in March 1916, to give material and moral support to the combatants and their families. Feminism partially put aside its pacifist endeavours. She saw the war as an opportunity to show the value of women. She also represented the Portuguese government at the 1st International Feminist Congress (1923), which took place in Italy. As President of the National Crusade for Portuguese Women, she organized the 1st Feminist and Education

Congress (1924) in Lisbon. At this congress she also presented a pedagogical project on the anti-alcoholic struggle in schools. This was an important milestone in Education in Portugal. Representing the Portuguese Government, she participated in the congress of the International Council of Women in Washington in 1925. She collaborated in the feminist press of the time, namely in the magazine *Alma Feminina*, which she also directed (1920-1929).

Disillusioned with the new political situation in the country resulting from the imposition of the dictatorship of the *Estado Novo* (1926), she left for Angola, where she mainly dedicated herself to medicine. Adelaide Cabete was the first and the only woman to vote in Luanda, where she lived, under the new Portuguese Constitution.

Italy

**MARGHERITA HACK****(12th of Jun 1922 – 29 Jun of 2013)**

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Margherita\\_Hack\\_30\\_marzo\\_2007\\_Roma\\_primo\\_piano.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Margherita_Hack_30_marzo_2007_Roma_primo_piano.jpg)

***The progress of knowledge takes place because we can rely on the work of the great geniuses who preceded us.***

***Margherita Hack***

Born in Florence in 1922, Margherita Hack's father Roberto Hack was a Florentine bookkeeper of Protestant Swiss origin. Her mother, Maria Luisa Poggesi, a Catholic from Tuscany, was a graduate of the Accademia di Belle Arti di Firenze and a miniaturist at the Uffizi Gallery. Both parents left their religion to join the Italian Theosophical Society, for which Roberto Hack was secretary for a time under the chairmanship of the countess Gamberini-Cavallini.

An athlete in her youth, Hack played basketball and competed in track and field during the National University Contests, called

the Littoriali under Mussolini's fascist regime, where she won the long jump and the high jump events. She married Aldo De Rosa on 19 February 1944 in the church of San Leonardo in Arcetri. De Rosa had been one of her childhood playmates.

Hack attended the Liceo Classico «Galileo Galilei» in Florence, and later in 1945, she graduated in physics from the University of Florence with a test score of 101/110. Her thesis in astrophysics was on Cepheid variables, based on her studies in the Arcetri Observatory.

In Italy, Hack was known for her anti-religious views and her continual criticism of the Catholic Church and of its hierarchy and institutions. She was a vegetarian and wrote a book explaining this choice entitled *Perché*

sono vegetariana (Why I Am A Vegetarian). she also wrote a book entitled *La mia vita in bicicletta* (My life on a bicycle).

She supported animal associations with donation and rehoming cats and dogs.

Hack died on 29 June 2013 at 91 years old. She had been hospitalized for a week for heart problems, from which she had suffered for about two years. She had refused to have heart surgery. Hack left her personal library, containing 24,000 books on astronomy, to the city of Trieste.

### Scientific activity

She was full professor of astronomy at the University of Trieste from 1964 to the 1st of November 1992, when Hack was placed «out of role» for seniority. She has been the first Italian woman to administrate the Trieste Astronomical Observatory from 1964 to 1987, bringing it to international fame.

Member of the most prestigious physics and astronomy associations, Margherita Hack was also director of the Astronomy Department at the University of Trieste from 1985 to 1991 and from 1994 to 1997. She was a member of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei (national member in the class of mathematical physics and natural sciences; second category: astronomy, geodesic, geophysics and applications; section A: astronomy and applications). She worked at many American and European observatories and was for long time, member of working

groups of ESA and NASA. In Italy, with an intensive promotional work, she obtained the growth of activity of the astronomical community with access to several satellites, reaching a notoriety of international level.

Hack has published several original papers in international journals and several books both of popular science and university level. In 1994 she was awarded with the Targa Giuseppe Piazzi for the scientific research, and in 1995 with the Cortina Ulisse Prize for scientific dissemination.

In 1978, Margherita Hack founded the bimonthly magazine *L'Astronomia* whose first issue came out in November 1979. Later, together with Corrado Lamberti, she directed the magazine of popular science and astronomy culture *Le Stelle*.

### Social and political activity

Margherita Hack was also known for her activities outside of science, especially in the social and political fields.

She was an atheist and she did not believe in any religion or form of supernaturalism. Hack also believed that ethics does not derive from religion, but from «principles of conscience» that allow anyone to have a secular view of life, respectful of other people's individuality and freedom.

Hostile to any form of superstition, including pseudosciences, Hack was a scientific guarantor of CICAP since 1989 and an honorary president of the Union of Rationalist Atheists and Agnostics (UAAR). In 2005, she



joined Luca Coscioni Association for the freedom of scientific research. She has been a member of the Transnational Radical Party.

Hack stood for Italian regional elections of 2005 in Lombardy in the list of the Party of Italian Communists obtaining 5,364 votes in the province of Milan. [22] After the election, she gave her seat to Bebo Storti. She sided again with the Party of Italian Communists in the 2006 Italian general election. She was nominated for several districts of the Chamber of Deputies, but she decided to give the seat up to devote herself to astronomy.

On 22 October 2008, during a student demonstration in Piazza della Signoria in Florence, Hack gave a lecture on astrophysics touching on the experiments carried out at the CERN about the Higgs boson, after a discussion against the law 133/08 (which previously was the law-decree 112, called «Tremonti decree»). On the 21st of January 2009 she became a candidate of the Anti-capitalist List for the European Elections of June. She wasn't elected because the list didn't reach the 4% threshold. In November 2009,

through an open letter on the MicroMega magazine, she criticized the Italian President of the Council, Silvio Berlusconi, on the matter of legal actions in which he was involved in and his alleged attempt to elude them.

During the regional elections of 2010, Hack was running with the Federazione della Sinistra and she was elected in the Rome district with over 7000 votes. During the first Council meeting she resigned leaving the seat to the other list's candidates. In October 2012 she declared her endorsement for Nichi Vendola during the left wing primary elections.

## Biography (some of her masterpieces)

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L'Amica delle stelle. Ed. Storia di una vita – Rizzoli - 2000

L'universo nel Terzo millennio.- Ed. Rizzoli – 2017

Nove vite come i gatti. I miei primi novant'anni laici e ribelli – Ed. Rizzoli – 2012

Vi racconto l'astronomia – Ed. La Terza – 2007

Perché sono vegetariana – Ed. Edizioni dell'Altana – 2011

I gatti della mia vita – Ed. Scienza Express - 2012

Italy

## ARTEMISIA GENTILESCHI

(8th of July 1593 – 1656)



Self-Portrait as a Lute Player, 1615–1617

Image Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artemisia\\_Gentileschi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artemisia_Gentileschi)

Artemisia Gentileschi (July 8, 1593 – c. 1656) was an Italian Baroque painter. Artemisia is considered among the most accomplished seventeenth-century artists, initially working in the style of Caravaggio. She was producing professional work by the age of fifteen. In an era when women had few opportunities to pursue artistic training or work as professional artists, Artemisia was the first woman to become a member of the Accademia di Arte del Disegno in Florence and she had an international clientele.

Many of Artemisia's paintings feature women from myths, allegories, and the Bible, including victims, suicides, and warriors. Some of her best known subjects are Susanna and

the Elders (particularly the 1610 version in Pommersfelden), Judith Slaying Holofernes (her 1614–1620 version is in the Uffizi gallery), and Judith and Her Maidservant (her version of 1625 is in the Detroit Institute of Arts). Artemisia was known for being able to depict the female figure with great naturalism and for her skill in handling color to express dimension and drama. Her achievements as an artist were long overshadowed by the story of her rape by Agostino Tassi when she was a young woman and her participation in the trial of her rapist. For many years Artemisia was regarded as a curiosity, but her life and art have been reexamined by scholars in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and she is now regarded as one of the most progressive and

expressive painters of her generation. Now she is being given recognition for her talents alone and major exhibitions at internationally esteemed fine art institutions, such as the National Gallery in London.

She had an early life period during which she was influenced by her father's style, come directly from Caravaggio. Her earliest surviving work, by seventeen-year-old Artemisia, is the *Susanna and the Elders* (1610, Schönborn collection in Pommersfelden). The painting depicts the Biblical story of Susanna. The painting shows how Artemisia assimilated the realism and effects used by Caravaggio without being indifferent to the classicism of Annibale Carracci and the Bolognese School of Baroque style.

As an artist, Artemisia enjoyed significant success in Florence. She was the first woman accepted into the *Accademia delle Arti del Disegno* (Academy of the Arts of Drawing). She maintained good relations with the most respected artists of her time, such as Cristofano Allori, and was able to garner the favour and the protection of influential people, beginning with Cosimo II de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany and especially, of the Grand Duchess, Christina of Lorraine. Her acquaintance with Galileo Galilei, evident from a letter she wrote to the scientist in 1635, appears to stem from her Florentine years; indeed, it may have stimulated her depiction

of the compass in the *Allegory of Inclination*. Her involvement in the courtly culture in Florence not only provided access to patrons, but it widened her education and exposure to the arts. She learned to read and write and became familiar with musical and theatrical performances. Such artistic spectacles helped Artemisia's approach to depicting lavish clothing in her paintings: «Artemisia understood that the representation of biblical or mythological figures in contemporary dress... was an essential feature of the spectacle of courtly life.»

Other significant works from this period include *La Conversione della Maddalena* (The Conversion of the Magdalene), *Self-Portrait as a Lute Player* (in the collection of the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art), and *Giuditta con la sua ancella* (Judith and her Maidservant), now in the Palazzo Pitti. Artemisia painted a second version of *Judith beheading Holofernes*, which now is housed in the Uffizi Gallery of Florence. The first, smaller *Judith Beheading Holofernes* (1612–13) is displayed in the Museo di Capodimonte, Naples. Six variations by Artemisia on the subject of *Judith Beheading Holofernes* are known to exist.

She spent time in Rome, Naples and also in London where he helped her father to decorating a ceiling allegory of *Triumph of Peace and the Arts* in the Queen's House.

## Germany

## LOUISE OTTO-PETERS

(26th of March 1819 – 13th of March 1895)



[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Louise\\_Otto-Peters\\_lithograph\\_c.\\_1848.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Louise_Otto-Peters_lithograph_c._1848.jpg)

***The participation of women in state interests is not a right, but a duty.***

**Louise Otto-Peters, 1834**

Louise Otto-Peters was a poet, author, and journalist. Her political efforts make her major figure in German women's history. Politicized during the 1830s, she, like many other women, actively participated in the 1848 Revolution. When political participation for women was banned, she continued to write and publicize. During her lifetime she wrote 60 books, short stories, novellas, opera libretti, historical reflections, pamphlets, w, poems, and innumerable newspaper articles. When in the 1860s the social structures became slightly less constrictive, it was her who paved the way for the first organized women's movement in Germany.

Together with Auguste Schmidt, Ottilie von Steyber, and Henriette Goldschmidt she founded the Leipzig Women's Educational Association in 1865. The organization held a women's conference with 300 attendees in the same year. This "women's battle", as newspapers called it mockingly, resulted in the founding of the Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein (General German Women's Association, ADF) and thus marked the birth of the organized women's movement in Germany. Louise Otto-Peters was the organization's president until her death in 1895. A core concern of the ADF was the increasing poverty of women and the lack of proper education possibilities. The ADF therefore aimed at helping women help

themselves, to give them access to school, vocational and university education and thus to independent gainful employment. In 1866, the ADF had 75 members; by 1870, it had more than 10,000. Men were only admitted as honorary members.

As a journalist, Louise Otto-Peters was a voice for the women's movement. From 1849 until 1850, she published the feminist *Frauen-Zeitung* until press regulations prevented her from doing so. In 1865, she became the editor of the journal *Neue Bahnen*, became the mouthpiece of the ADF and the most important publication of the German women's movement.

The legacy of the Louise Otto-Peter's achievement lives on, even if her name is not familiar to many today. In March 1894, a new umbrella organization, the Federation of German Women's Associations (BDF), was founded to account for and organize the plethora of women's organizations that had formed by then. By 1913, about 500,000 women belonged to the movement. After the BDF decided to discontinue its operations in 1933 as not to fall victim to Nazi ideologies,

it reformed under the name "Deutscher Staatsbürgerinnen-Verband" (German Female Citizen Association) in 1947 which operates still today. Also the *Deutscher Frauenrat* (German Women's Council, which represents about 12 million women and thus is the country's largest political lobby for women) follows in the tradition of the BDF.

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## Germany

THE MOTHERS OF THE  
GERMAN CONSTITUTION<sup>1</sup>

Bestand Erna Wagner-Hehmke, Haus der Geschichte, Bonn

Article 2 Section 3 of the German constitution states: "Men and women are equal." That this sentence entered this fundamental law is due to the efforts of four women who, alongside 61 men, were part of the Parlamentarischer Rat. This assembly was elected by eleven German state parliaments of the three western zones and had the purpose to initiate a new political beginning in 1948/49 for Germany based on democratic principles, three years after the end of World War II.

Elisabeth Selbert, Friederike Nadig, Helene Weber, and Helene Wessel were representatives of a whole generation of women who had grown up in the Weimar Republic, through WWII, and helped rebuild the country after the war. The fact that 94% of the assembly were men was actually

a massive misrepresentation of the post-war population in Germany, as women outnumbered men by seven million. Women's organizations were allowed to resume their activities relatively quickly after the end of the war and there was a surge of activism towards rebuilding a democratic Germany with equal rights for men and women. Despite the numerical dominance of women within the population, this did not lead to women having more influence on political decision-making processes in the newly reestablished parties, however. Men were already back in most positions of power and decision-making. Accordingly, political participation remained unattractive for many women and numbers for female members of political parties dwindled below 20% until the 1960s. "Men and women are equal"—in 1949, this was

not a statement about reality but a program, and its incorporation into the Basic Law was preceded by heated debate. After it had failed twice before the Parliamentary Council, Selbert initiated a broad public protest, carried by the Women's Secretariat of the SPD, by non-partisan women's associations, local politicians, and women's professional associations. This led to a flood of resolutions, letters, and statements directed at the assembly which supported Selbert and Nadig in their effort. Together with Helene Weber and Helene Wessel, they finally managed to convince the members of the Parliamentary Council. Without the commitment of the four women in the Parliamentary Council and the many women who campaigned in public for full equality, this formulation would not have been possible.

Granted, this success did not mean that women in Germany actually were treated equally. In 1994 the following sentence was added to the article: "The state promotes the actual implementation of equal rights for women and men and works towards the elimination of existing disadvantages," making it the government's responsibility to work towards gender equality. But even though there is still a long way to go, the Mothers of the German Constitution paved the way for gender equality in Germany and should receive the attention this achievement deserves.

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1. The German term 'Grundgesetz' actually translates to 'Basic Law' or 'Fundamental Law', not 'constitution' (Verfassung) since originally it was expected to be an interim solution and a future unified Germany would write a constitution that would be approved by the people. Only in 1990, after the reunification, the Basic Law was adopted as the constitution but under its old name.

Slovenia

## ZORA JANEKOVI: EIN LEBEN FÜR DIE MEDIZIN

(30th of September 1918 - 17th of März  
2015)



<https://kvarkadabra.net/2020/07/zora-janzekovic/>

But who was or rather what was Zora Janžekovič? A Slovenian plastic surgeon (no female form) specialized in burn wound treatment. Zora is a great world star of the medical science. Nevertheless, in Slovenia, she is still overlooked, though her name and photo have been entered in course books worldwide. Zora was hardworking, highly imaginative and perseverant. As a child she observed a local doctor at work what made her enthusiastic about medicine so that she wanted to become a medical doctor (doctoress is rather archaic and ironic in English) herself - a rather unusual choice for a girl in the times when medicine was still dominated by men. She studied medicine at the University of Zagreb. During her studies she fell in love with a Ukrainian fellow student

and they both worked in the Varaždin hospital during the Second World War where Zora gained a lot of experience. Then she spent several years waiting for her intern place in the Department of plastic surgery at the Ljubljana University Clinic Centre. Though she was a highly committed young doctor (no female form) she could not avoid being looked down by her male colleagues. Like in many European countries the profession of surgeon was considered to be too stressing for women and therefore not accessible for them. Zora resisted and developed a method of immediate burn wound treatment cutting off the dead tissue and covering it by patient's own skin. It was a breakthrough in plastic surgery. But again, being a female doctor, working in a small hospital in Maribor with



little funding at her disposal and on the top of it behind the iron curtain, Zora Janžekovič had to struggle against many stereotypes. It was difficult to change mentalities and indoctrinated minds of her colleagues. Crucial for her professional and scientific recognition was a congress of plastic surgery in Ljubljana in 1968 where she presented her method (1335 patients, well documented treatment with photos and films). From then on surgeons from the entire world were coming to Maribor to learn from her. She became a world icon in her specialty (but also a monster, difficult to work with, the mad woman from Yugoslavia, etc.) arguing that burn wounds get contaminated from inappropriate treatment and not from the environment. She co-founded a ward of plastic surgery in her hospital and at an advanced age a Foundation for students of medicine originating from

Slovenska Bistrica. She drastically diminished contamination cases and was listed one of the 25 most influential medical doctors in the world. Despite this, in Slovenia she is still unknown.

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Slovenia

**ANGELA VODE**

(5th of January 1892 – 5th of May 1985)


[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angela\\_Vode](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angela_Vode)

Angela Vode (1892–1985) was born into a poor working-class family. Her name has been one of the most hidden names after the Second World War. Before the war she was an educator (women could only be teachers or wives), leader of feminine movements and a left-wing politician. She published several books among which the most visible is *Gender and Fate*. She was an early member of the Communist Party when this was still secret in 1940. Due to her loud opposing the Stalin-Ribbentrop Pact she was excluded from the party. In the so called Nagode's Trial in 1947 Angela Vode was accused of being a spy, an enemy of the working class and on the payroll of foreign governments. Sentenced to 20-year imprisonment she was released in 1953 due to her health condition. Till her death

in 1985 she was leading a forgotten, isolated life away from public eyes without the right to work, to social and health insurance, but she was following and analyzing political developments, remaining critical of the doings of her former "comrades". In the 70s she wanted both to review her life and social developments. After her death the manuscript was safely hidden to be published only much later in 2004 titled *Hidden Memory*. The book deals with feminist and revolutionary movements before the Second World War.

Angela Vode was brought up as it was normal for girls to be brought up in then Austro-Hungarian Empire (to become teachers or wives!). Once married, women were forced (by law) to give up their teaching job.

Supposedly married female teachers would be a bad and immoral role model for young girls? Angela worked as a teacher until 1917 when she was dismissed for being a member of an anti-Austria youth movement. She then studied special education in Prague, Berlin and Vienna to become a teacher of children with disabilities.

She wrote *Women in Contemporary Society* where she admitted natural differences between men and women but required gender social equality. Vode urged women to learn about the past and society as to improve their social position. She argued that healthy marriage should be based on love, friendship, mutual respect, understanding but also economic independence. She said that "...women are an organic part of human

society, nation, state and family just like men, their life and position being equally dependent on political, economic, and cultural developments." She also emphasized that a demand for women's participation in public life was legitimate.

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France

## EMILIE DU CHATELET, SCHOLARLY MARQUISE AND WOMAN OF THE CENTURY OF ENLIGHTENMENT

(17th of December 1706 – 10th of  
September 1749)



Image Source: [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89milie\\_du\\_Ch%C3%A2telet#/media/Fichier:Emilie\\_Chatelet\\_portrait\\_by\\_Latour.jpg](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89milie_du_Ch%C3%A2telet#/media/Fichier:Emilie_Chatelet_portrait_by_Latour.jpg)

***«I would involve women in all human rights, especially the rights of the spirit. It seems that they were born to deceive, and this exercise is left only to their souls.»***

***Emilie Du Châtelet***

These words were written in the 18th century by Emile Du Châtelet, an extraordinary woman who was able to develop her intellectual qualities and impose herself in the exclusively male world of science.

Emilie du Châtelet, whose full name is Gabrielle Emile Le Tonnelier de Breteuil, was born an aristocrat on December 17, 1706, in Paris, at the dawn of the century of Enlightenment

of which she was one of the leading figures. The Daughter of an open-minded man who offered her an exceptional education for a woman of that era, she danced, played the harpsichord, learned Latin, Greek and German, was interested in fine dress, opera and, science. She married the Marquis Florent Claude du Châtelet, who seemed dazzled by her intelligence, and the two entered into a flexible relationship that left the Marquise du Châtelet free to frequent the great men of her time, such as Bernoulli, and Voltaire.

She is passionate about physics and analyzes Leibniz's theoretical work on kinetic energy, which she illustrates with the help

of experiments. Emilie du Châtelet wrote a physics treatise, published by the Academy of Sciences, a first for a woman.

She is interested in Newton's work and begins a translation of his *Principia mathematica* one of the most important scientific books ever published, which has become Mathematical

principles of natural philosophy. Published in 1756. This work will be the only French translation, and it still the case today.

At the age of 43, Emilie du Châtelet dies four days after the difficult birth of a daughter who will not survive.

France

## MARIE-ANNE PIERRETTE PAULZE, THE MOTHER OF MODERN CHEMISTRY

(20th of January 1758 - 10th of February 1836)



Image Source: <http://www.lesromantiques.com/?a=1123/Antoine-Lavoisier-Marie-Anne-Paulze-Amours-Historiques>

Marie-Anne Pierrette Paulze, wife Lavoisier, then Rumford, born in Montbrison on January 20, 1758, died in Paris on February 10, 1836, was a French scientist, painter and illustrator. She was the wife and collaborator of the chemist Antoine Lavoisier (1743-1794).

Marie-Anne Pierrette Paulze is the daughter of the general farmer Jacques-Alexis Paulze. She lost her mother when she was only three years old. Her father then decided to send her to the Visitation convent in Montbrison, so that she could receive the classical education of a young girl from the upper bourgeoisie. It was there that she forged her character, taking a special interest in science and drawing. At the age of 13, Marie-Anne married Antoine-Laurent de Lavoisier, a general farmer

known as the founder of modern chemistry and respiratory physiology.

The couple had no children. This circumstance perhaps explains the exclusive devotion that Marie-Anne and Antoine devoted to each other during their union. She was a precious companion for her husband and collaborated in his scientific work by translating various publications into French and by drawing all the plates illustrating his «Elementary Chemical Treaty» published in 1789.

In particular, she took numerous notes and drawings of their experiments, which enabled them to disseminate their discoveries, which were none other than the precepts of modern chemistry.

# CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

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## INTRODUCTION

### A woman is not an imperfect man

"What is the position of women in your country?" asked Hélène Cixous a critical French post-structural feminist writer and philosopher, a girl in her twenties living in a socialist country (time, space, context, culture and education are elements that construct gender awareness!). Till this unexpected question, the girl had thought that everything was where it should be. She was not conscious that women were rather excluded from political institutions and from the public discourse in general.<sup>1</sup> Neither was she aware that what mattered to women was not in the mainstream press but merely in specialized magazines. She did not know, what she learned later from a visible female politician, that women's issues were of little interest to the male members of the National Parliament who each time when a women's issue was on the agenda started showing signs of boredom.<sup>2</sup> She suffered from male sexual harassment but she had no idea that it was an attack on her freedom and human decency. Most leading positions even in the most feminized occupational branches were occupied by men. National awards in sciences like mathematics were never granted to women, etc. The situation of young girls and women in today's consumer society is even less enviable in a number of ways.

They are again reduced to their bodies, but what is even worse, to their shoes, clothes,

and the monetary value of such accessories. Not being conscious of it, many women accept the social construct of their identity within their culture and society.<sup>3</sup> But women are often powerful, responsible, educated, and frank. And this upsets their male counterparts.

They are again reduced to their bodies, but what is even worse, to their shoes, clothes, and the monetary value of such accessories. Not being conscious of it, many women accept the social construct of their identity within their culture and society. But women are often powerful, responsible, educated, and frank. And this upsets their male counterparts.

***But what has been socially constructed can also be deconstructed. Ways to do it are different; education and language used are not the least of them. Moreover, it is never too early, nor too late to start doing it.***

In her most famous essay "The Laugh of the Medusa" Hélène Cixous argues that women can "read and choose to remain trapped in their own bodies" or they can move away from the dominant male discourse found in patriarchal systems and use their own female language to express themselves (écriture féminine or feminine-defined writing). Female writing discussed by Hélène Cixous was supposed to bring to surface what masculine history had repressed in them. Women should be heard as women within a female discourse rather than women as subjects of male phallogocentric discourse. Women should write about themselves, their bodies and go away from male, phallogocentric concepts, language etc.



***Feminine-defined writing, language used and the body can be used as source of women's power and inspiration.<sup>4</sup>***

Educators and staff working in the field of older adult education are now clearly aware of their mission; to constantly remind each of us that people in old age differ and cannot be defined by arbitrary group characteristics, mostly age or cohort and ageist stereotypes. They need to be empowered to counteract such definitions. Nevertheless, in doing so, they seem to be forgetting that—

***There is a basic distinction between older men and older women, older female and older male learners coming from their gender and their gender experiences accumulated throughout life.***

***Luckily, old age and gender are social constructs. Focusing on old age and gender values in compliance with basic European and human values, you can contribute to their deconstruction.***

No wonder, that Cixous's focuses on freedom, freedom from the patriarchal notion, which is a gender idea, freedom from the gender rules, freedom from the sexism. Freedom is one of the six basic European values as well.<sup>5</sup>

***It would be obviously more appropriate if older people developed belongingness to both their age and their gender and considered themselves firstly as humans and secondly as men and women.***

Similarly, older people are primarily human and secondly old. Older adult education should empower them to be aware of this fact.

This conviction was at the root of the True To Age, True To Gender project and its related activities.

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**1•** When she became a university professor she asked her students how they felt about a TV programme titled "Why women are under represented in the world of politics?", a programme meant to celebrate the International Women's Day. Again her students did not notice that only men were invited into the programme as authorities on this matter

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**2.** With the exception of matters of man's control over woman's body. Simone Weill addressed the audience mostly composed of men parliamentarians by saying: "No woman happily resorts to abortion. Just listen to women. It has always been a tragedy and it will remain a tragedy.« The adoption of the dissuasive and protecting law on abortion was a great breakthrough in 1975.

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**3.** With the establishment of democracy in Spain, a breakthrough was made as concerns equality and the rights of women, but institutional, legal, cultural and economic heritage of Francoism being still there achieving gender equity will be a long process. The term "machismo" is still the order of the day.

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**4.** Feminine-defined writing is not restricted to female writing, also men can use it.

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**5.** She was further greatly influenced by Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida.

## CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT TRUE TO AGE, TRUE TO GENDER

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, French philosophers, define philosophy as dealing with 'forming, inventing and fabricating concepts'. Therefore, a conceptual background is actually a kind of philosophy, in our case, philosophy of gender issues of older women *through history and in our time*.

Undoubtedly, adult educators whose essential role is to address their learners' both implicit and explicit knowledge while guiding their learning in the right direction (grounded in theories) need to have gained a more comprehensive picture of the topic before they start delivering an educational programme. In short, they need to be familiar with, and they need to agree with at least the main concepts of their topics.

In addition to Simone de Beauvoir, novelist, sociologist and philosopher, and the author of *The Second Sex*, both Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari deal with what is usually referred to as the condition of women.

Moreover, it is well known that human nature tends to feel identified with **communities** and groups of people.

***We all tend to feel that we are represented by a community and its culture; our values,***

***beliefs and the manners in which we relate and interact with others are defined by the culture of our societies.***

**Culture** is an extensively broad concept in meaning, embedding an endless variety of areas: language, music, literature, religion, and gastronomy. However, within this long list of cultural fields, gender tends to be forgotten.

***Despite this fact, gender issues are an integral part of our culture: The way members of a community understand gender, how men and women interact, and their roles in society.***

Thus, it is crucial for the project *True To Age, True To Gender* to come to a common understanding of *how gender issues fit within culture; of how we may define the concepts of European identity and European values, and the main elements of gender issues*. And, more specifically, *how and why many remarkable women have been forgotten*, their stories untold.

## THE FORGOTTEN GENDER TOPIC IN OLDER ADULT EDUCATION

Forgotten are women; forgotten are gendered educational contents for empowering men and women as humans, not as men and women. Such contents are meant to establish better mutual understanding and better relationships between men and women in later life.

Older women and older female learners have age-specific needs and gender-specific needs: They need to learn about gendered stereotypes, their social and economic status, their social roles, and their physical and mental health. They also have gender capital that has to be addressed through the education of older women. Educational programmes for older women should advance women's active and powerful role in society and their numerous social roles. They should also reject discourse about frailty and the dependence of older women. They should address the validity of the values imposed on older women by culture and society.

Many educational programmes for older people have been devised over the last decades meeting their analysed learning needs. They deal with older people's life transitions, health, participation in society, dialogue with younger generations, arts, etc., but to our knowledge, the gender capital older women bring into education has rarely been addressed.

### **Programming engendered older adult education**

Programming engendered older adult education should include investigation and revelation of the human and gendered dimensions of ageing. Social invisibility and marginalization of ageing in our societies will be researched together with older learners enrolled in educational programmes. Their objective is to help learners understand the concept of gender that is a complex social construction mediated by culture and power relations. Furthermore, ageing is not static. Instead, it is a relational phenomenon across lifetimes and has much potential for change and positive development.

Adult educators, social workers, staff of clubs of pensioners, organizations and individuals who work directly with older people may learn a lot from gendered narratives. Consequently, understanding gender and how to live one's multiple femininities and masculinities in old age and how they can be reflected in older adult education programmes are questions around which this project and project activities will be constructed. <sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, It is well known that human nature tends to feel identified with communities and groups of people. We feel represented by a community and its culture; our values, beliefs and the manners in which we relate and interact with others are defined by the culture of our societies and likewise by European culture (composed of bits of national cultures) and values.

***Men and women experience their gender (in) equalities. Nevertheless, they are rarely addressed in older adult education, to which, however, older men and women turn for social, political and psychological empowerment.***

In older female students, who are under the pressure of social stereotypes about older women, there is a feeling of uneasiness and imperfection due to their gender and age. For instance, in the Slovenian language, older women tend to feel uncomfortable when there are no men in their study group, saying, "It would feel good if we had at least one man among us to make us human". They would need to know about the position of women in society and the need to be freed from male rules and values and to their right to be human. The idea is that being a woman means lacking something, like in Spanish culture, where a woman manager with male workers needs to be forgiven.

***In old age, being a woman is considered as a cumulative disadvantage (being a woman and being old, being less well off than men, etc.). On the other hand, Cixous argues that women do not lack anything, whereas phallocentrism does!***

However, the position of older men who withdraw from public life into the private sphere after retirement may be even less enviable. It is more difficult to attract them with educational offers. Therefore, it is **important** to give older adult education a

more gendered dimension regarding the choice of topics and the delivery of the programme. (Kidd, 1973)

***In older adult education, older people are generally thought of as a group of older individuals defined mostly by their age and ageism, with hardly any regard to the gender and gender capital experiences they have accumulated throughout life. These experiences have to be reflected in educational programmes.***

It has been generally accepted that:

***gender can matter even more in old age than in childhood or adulthood (mostly due to sociological aspects rather than psychological and physiological aspects of later life).***

While inequalities of women and men persist over the whole course of their lives in terms of the level of education, occupational segregation, income, etc., in old age, however, they become intensified, resulting in «cumulative disadvantage.»

Moreover, despite their valuable achievements, many women in Europe, of all ages, are forgotten and invisible. This happens whether or not they lead normal lives, or are internationally active, intellectual or artistic. In this Information Age, our ignorance is unforgeable.

To our theoretical and experiential knowledge, all too often, programme developers and educators in the field of older adult education address older people as a social group and

through the prism of social representations (stereotypes) of older people. This is a harmful tendency. On the contrary, developers should understand the true otherness of older people (older men and women) and contribute to the deconstruction of the group stereotypes thus enhancing the self-esteem and social position of older people.

***The problem of gender (in)equalities in old age into which both men and women bring their gender accumulated capital (experience) is to be addressed in older education in the same way as needs, interests, values, aspirations of older people in general.***

6. Virginie Despentès in a radio France culture programme "Femmes puissantes" broadcast on 28/12/2019 argues that there is "middle class femininity" which she depicts as a smiling "hostess femininity" in women oppressed by powerful men.

## MAIN CONCEPTS RELATED TO GENDER ISSUES

This conceptual background encompasses a significant number of essential concepts related to the engendered education in later life.

### Gender

- *Gender is a social status given to men and women.*
- *Gender does not equate sex (physiological characteristics of men and women). "One is not born a woman, one becomes a woman," says Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*.*

- *Gender affects all parts of life—social, economic, political, etc.*
- *It forms the basis of power and resource allocation.*
- *Gender is constructed socially; gender construction being dependent on time, space and context. To illustrate this point, it has been generally accepted that in the context of crises, dictatorship, etc. women are often insulted, belittled, humiliated by men.*
- *What has been constructed socially can also be deconstructed socially (through older adult education, etc.)*

**Gender socialization** is defined as acceptance of social norms and social roles. Individuals through life internalize these. Consequently, gender socialization leads to structuring relations of domination and subordination in society. Gender socialization is a process impacted by parents, significant adults and peers but also by the geographical and cultural environment. The process of gender socialization starts at birth: boys are socialized to take up men's social roles and women to take up women's social roles. Men perform their roles sequentially; women perform several roles at a time.

**Gender approach** is needed to understand social reality.

- *Gender is not about women and men. It is about their relationships and not about women in isolation.*
- *It highlights the difference between men and women's interests, how their interests interact and how they are expressed. It highlights conventions like hierarchies in*

*families, communities, and society at large.*

- *Gender approach is about approaching differences among men and women based on age, class, wealth, etc.*
- *It is about the way social roles change as a result of economic, technological, political trends.*
- *The concept of gender approach is a dynamic one.*

### **Gender issues are an integral part of culture:**

The way gender is understood by people of a community, the way men and women interact, and their roles in society are all a matter of culture.

**Gender issues as culture** are related to how women are treated in European film, literature, and on TV. Culture is a complex concept depending on space and time. It can be individual or not, material, immaterial, a system of representations, symbols, etc. but also ways of life of a given society, ways inherited and transmitted by community.

The mediation of gender culture is important. Today, culture has integrative value: older people's culture, women's culture. All groups have the right to their own culture to be expressed, heard, seen and listened to.

**Older women as holders of rights** in different areas of life; economic independence, the right to work, equal wages, legal equality, the right to vote, the right to education, the right to emancipation, the right to their body.

Women have made perseverant, invisible steps in the past towards today's women's

rights that have to be preserved and constantly struggled for.

The role of the church in shaping women's position dependent on their husbands' needs must be understood.

### **Gender theories**

There are gender theories that can be used in engendered older adult education.

#### **Functional theory Talcott Parson, 1950**

- There are social roles that are better suited to one gender than another. Societies are more stable on this basis. Man is more suited for instrumental roles since he provides material support for the family. Women are more suited for expressive roles.
- More value is given to male dominated spheres.
- Women have less access to resources than men.

#### **Conflict theory**

- Men have had many privileges in history and are entitled to maintain them.
- Men remain in areas dominated by men, so they have more resources.
- The women's demands lead to conflicts.

#### **Symbolic interaction theory**

- Differences are socially constructed and consolidated within society.
- Gender is socially reproduced in everyday life.

#### **Feminist theory**

- Analyses the status of men and women in society, their privileges and the resources they have access to.

### Gender binary and third gender

- Classification of sex and gender into two distinct, opposite, disconnected forms of masculine and feminine.
- It involves a gender blind and gender-neutral approach (invisibility of women).
- Most often women's roles are ignored or rather presumed to be under those of men.
- Gender binary results in gender discrimination.
- Gender identity is assigned. Women are supposed to be tender and men courageous, etc.

### Gender stereotypes / social representations of older men and women

- They are primitive thinking schemes about gender attributes, differences, roles of individuals and groups. (Boys do not cry; women are homemakers).
- They contribute to the status quo of gender roles.
- Social representations of older women and older people in general in European society. Nancy Fraser, a philosopher and activist and a feminist is famous for having developed a *theory of social justice*, an important prism through which to observe the position of women in society. There is injustice on the level of distribution of income, economic level, socio-cultural and symbolic level (stereotypes about older women).

### Gender identity

- Gender identity shows how one thinks of one's gender. A man's gender role should demonstrate typically male characteristics.
- You have to obey the rules applied to your gender!

- Gender identity is often an outward expression of gender roles.
- Gender roles and gender identity can be in conflict.

### Gender roles

- They are assigned by society.
- They are related to social status of men or women.
- Gender roles are affected by gender, class, and environment.
- They imply speech, movement, etc.
- 

**Gender capital** (experiences) accumulated through life.

### History of women

It is about their needs, interests, wishes, aspirations, and emotions.

History was written by victorious men while women were pushed to the edge and unjustly forgotten. But such women existed and exist; they think, they have ideas, they write, they have proposals. Despite everything, women who make up half of the population — are quite often forgotten, even though they have the right to express their opinion. To illustrate this point, one can mention Olympe de Gouges, a French activist and feminist, author of the *forgotten Declaration of the rights of women*, written on 14 September in 1789 in response to the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*. She was a woman of modest social condition, enlightened by the revolution and soon beheaded. Have you ever heard of her? Of course not!

**European values** and identity in relation to women

When we think of values, we think of what is important to us in life. Schwartz's (1992) Theory of Basic Human Values has promoted a revival of empirical research on values. The value theory (Schwartz, 1992, 2006a) specifies main features that are implicit in the writings of many theorists:

*Values are beliefs linked to affect. Values refer to desirable goals that motivate action. Values transcend specific actions and situations.*

They may be relevant to the workplace, politics, business, etc. Values serve as standards or criteria. Values are ordered by importance relative to one another. The relative importance of multiple values guides action. Any attitude or behaviour typically has implications for more than one value. The foundation of our free, modern and democratic society are "Basic European Values". The European Social Survey (ESS) measures 10 of them.

## MAIN QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED DURING THE PROJECT AND WITHIN PROJECT ACTIVITIES

We will address a range of topics and questions in this project and particularly through its planned educational activities. The project True To Age, True To Gender addresses an under-addressed topic: Not only empowerment of older people, but also the empowerment of *older women through older*

*adult education.*

The empowerment of older female learners depends on the choice of educational content and on the delivery itself. Educational programmes for older women (and indeed older men) should have gendered dimensions and should capitalize on the gender capital (experiences) older women bring into education.

For a long time, it has been clear that older people's education *is not a casual leisure time activity*. It can be, and it should be, pleasant but it should also lead to the development of older people and their environment. *It is a serious leisure time activity.*

It has long been clear that older adult education, regardless of the educational topic, has to empower older people/older women, clarifying their social position, revealing their abilities and directing them to social participation.

### Objectives

- To enable older people/older women to be rights holders as well as active and contributing citizens
- To enable older women to better understand themselves and their social position
- To recall the steps taken by women in European countries towards becoming more equal in a more just society
- To collect gender narrations from the past and present and increase the awareness of belittled women's contribution to community
- To review European values and rights and examine how they comply with women's



values and rights; to consolidate women's personal and European identity

- To discuss gender and its role in specific areas of life
- To examine the importance of using gendered language in communication with men and communities
- To study gender and old age-specific social stereotypes that put pressure on older women
- To scrutinize older women's relationships to their own body and their feeling of shame
- To become familiar with engendered older adult education and develop a related educational programme for educators involved in older adult education

**We will address a range of topics and questions during this project and particularly through its planned educational activities:**

(1) How does older adult education contribute to older people's active citizenship and participation in society? To what extent does it help them become aware of their rights and enable them to commit towards social justice?

(2) History of women in European countries: Steps taken by women and men across Europe towards shaping women into rights holders. How do democracy, freedom, and basic European values in general influence women and their lives as well as their personal and European identity?

(3) What is gender and why should groups of older learners study it? Which areas of life does it affect and how? How do older women interact and communicate with men in their families, communities and society at large? What does language reveal, conceal and impose?

(4) How do social representations (gender stereotypes, prejudices) about older women affect their economic, social and political situation in different areas of life?

(5) What is the origin and reason for older women's feelings of shame? (Older) women's relation with their body? How are (older) women pictured in cinema, on TV, and in culture across European countries? What is the social construction of female gender?

(6) Who are belittled or forgotten women of the past and present in EU countries whose lives could teach us something about women?

(7) How are men and women's gender roles and gendered capital (experiences) mirrored in older adult education and how can we program engendered, concept-based education for older women? What are the ways of thinking, seeing, and knowing for adult educators?

## CONCLUSION

In postmodern societies being an older woman is considered a cumulative disadvantage (being a woman and being old, being less well off than men, having fewer rights than men, etc.) though in old age gender matters and relationships matter even more than they used to. It is time for older women to nurture their identity and their values and become *holders of rights in their families, communities and societies at large*.

Engendered later life education and European values may help improve older women's identity and social status and consolidate their values of freedom from men and social representations of both old age and older women.

Engendered education and an increased self-awareness of women should improve women's understanding of themselves and the position in society they merit. We learn how they think, how they feel and what their

abilities and rights are. Their ideas should be taken seriously.

Older women need to be encouraged to play different social roles—not only those assigned to them in different European cultures. The more and the better they play their diverse social roles, the more they will be in a position to interact with others, and the more they will be seen, heard and listened to by their families, communities and society at large.

The TAG project has a role to play, namely, to better the understanding of women and men and their relationships as humans. Gendered educational contents should create an awareness in women that they matter! Naturally, deconstructing what has been socially constructed takes a long time but it is not impossible and, it is worth it to approach this deconstruction in various ways, education being one of them.

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