

ASLECT Project – Active Seniors Learn, Educate, Communicate and Transmit¹

Introduction

ASLECT is a European cooperation project², funded through the Lifelong Learning Programme, which promotes seniors both as (re)sources and beneficiaries of learning. The project is a good example of transnational partnership (Austria, Germany, Romania, Italy, Bulgaria and Turkey) and is featured in the Initiatives database of the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations on the EUROPA server of the European Union.

One of the main objectives of this project is to fight the idea that elder persons lose their cultural and social relevance. The project goal is to promote a different attitude towards seniors, in terms of their capacity to learn and further transmit their expertise, and in terms of their relationships with the community in general and with cultural organizations in particular.

In line with the principles promoted by the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012, the main objectives of ASLECT are:

- to provide resources for strengthening the capacity of cultural and educational organizations in order to offer an adult learning environment suitable for seniors;
- to create opportunities for retired professionals to use their experience and skills and become adult educators;
- to establish partnerships between the involved organizations and other cultural and social institutions.

A significant stake for the ASLECT project is to promote the understanding of senior citizens not only as users of social services, but also as active co-creators of culture and education in the local community.

The ASLECT project

ASLECT aims at making visible the existing skills and interests of seniors at the formal and informal level, and at placing these at the centre of activities in cultural organisations and educational institutions. The project goals are achieved in a variety of ways first, by presenting and promoting to cultural professionals and adult educators learning tools designed and tested with seniors; then by organising and carrying out local workshops with cultural professionals and seniors.

The project partners develop together a set of criteria to identify those educational practices involving seniors which were relevant to the project goal. The main criteria are represented by the concepts of seniors' empowerment and participation in the educational and cultural process.

At the initial phase ASLECT identifies a series of Good Practices on Seniors' Involvement in Education and in Cultural Life. The identification was conducted on the basis of a 43-question-catalogue of Good Practice Criteria focusing on four areas: empowerment, participation, impact, and sustainability. The research reviewed all the European projects compendia between 2007 and 2010, as well as the respective project websites in order to collect examples of good practice in which seniors were successfully integrated.

In the Second Phase, the projects are randomly distributed among five partners. Each partner writes a summary for the assigned projects. The purpose of the summaries is to outline the most significant project information, using the project websites and all the available material.

¹ Slavina Lozanova, Boian Savtchev. Assist Net. Bulgaria

² <http://www.aslect.eu/>

In the Third Phase, the written project summaries are sent to two other partners. Their task is to review the summary and add their opinion to the final results and findings. The review questionnaire consisted of two questions concerning the usability of the summary, multiple choice questions regarding empowerment, participation, impact and sustainability as well as two open questions regarding the usefulness of the gained knowledge and available materials for ASLECT. Based on the evaluation of the projects during the Identification and Review Phases, a ranking is created in order to determine the best 15 projects. As a result the best 15 European projects on senior's involvement in education and culture are presented in detail³.

As a valorisation project, ASLECT is focusing on identifying relevant educational approaches for seniors, in disseminating them and in advocating for more collaboration between cultural organisations and seniors. In a practical way ASLECT valorises results from previous projects; therefore, in the project run the available educational materials, developed within any of the 15 listed projects/Good practice cases selected during the identification phase are used. All educational materials form the basis for testing the training sessions organised by every ASLECT-partner with cultural professionals, aimed at giving sufficient knowledge and input to participants in order to develop their own programmes and initiatives for and with seniors⁴. More than 110 seniors from the six partners' countries participated in the local workshops, organized in project partner countries. The aim of these local workshops was to develop the knowledge and skills of cultural and educational professionals working or willing to work with seniors, of volunteers and seniors.

Conclusion

Developing cultural, artistic and educational programmes for seniors becomes crucial in the perspective of today's social, economic and cultural dynamics.

The results of the project work are made available for cultural professionals, adult educators, seniors and seniors' representatives from all over Europe. It is oriented toward those practices which place active learning at their core, involving seniors in the decision-making process, determining them to take responsibilities in relation to the process, results and meaning of the action, within which their knowledge and expertise is recognized and used as a valuable resource of learning. All project activities provide opportunities for sufficient social interactions by encouraging seniors to be active, creative, participative and learning to learn. Learning how to socialize and being socially active, as well as being resourceful and independent at the same time are among the significant indicators with positive impact on seniors' Quality of Life.

A set of recommendations is developed, which is relevant to the concept of QoL. Active community participation, which is to improve seniors' QoL, requires motivation strategies, based on participants' experience and interests. Self-directed learning and informal learning that happen outside a formal classroom setting is recommended, because it responds intelligently and flexibly to the specific needs of the elders in accordance with their specific situations and practical needs.

Along with the seminars and workshops transnational exchanges are defined as possible tools for motivating seniors to take part in community life, a matter of giving a new way to unusual learning opportunities which are to improve seniors' Quality of life.

³ <http://www.aslect.eu/index.php/en/good-practices>

⁴ <http://www.aslect.eu/documents/brochure/BroshuraEN15.01.2013.pdf>

This text is part of the book “Education and quality of life of senior citizens”. See the full book in <http://www.edusenior.eu>

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License. See full license at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>



Attribution: Pilar Escuder-Mollon et al., 2013

Publisher: Universitat Jaume I, Castellón, Spain, and University of Helsinki, Finland

ISBN: 978-84-8021-986-0 (Spain)

ISBN: 978-952-10-7760-9 (Finland)

The full book form is part of the “Evaluation toolkit on seniors’ education to improve their quality of life” project (<http://www.edusenior.eu>). This project is supported by the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission reference: 518227-LLP-1-2011-1-ES-GRUNDTVIG-GMP.



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.