



N E C E

★ NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

The Impact of Cultural and Citizenship Education on Social Cohesion

**3 – 5 December 2009
Vilnius, Lithuania
European Capital of Culture 2009**

Report

**Workshop 7
Civic Participation in the Public Sphere: What Do Inter-Generational
and Local Projects Contribute?**

**Rapporteur
Sonja Lebos, Croatia**

www.nece.eu

Civic Participation in the Public Sphere: What Do Inter-generational and Local Projects Contribute?

Scientific Inputs:

Julia Franz, University Erlangen-Nürnberg (Germany)

Project Presentations:

Jürgen Lange, Work and Life (Arbeit und Leben, Germany)

Ulrich Dovermann, Federal Agency for Civic Education (Germany)

Christian Pfeffer-Hoffmann, Institute for Education in the Information Society (Germany)

Moderation:

Gabriele Rösing, Center for Applied Policy Research (Germany)

The key-note input was given by **Julia Franz**, who presented her work under the title **Social Cohesion and Intergenerational Learning Arrangements**, where the intergenerational bond between older and younger people within societies was emphasized as one of the most important elements to work with and promote social cohesiveness. The key-note presentation introduced an empirical perspective on intergenerational learning arrangements in adult education which were studied by analyzing group discussions and questionnaires of adult educators and participants as well as by systematical observations made in learning arrangements. Some very interesting examples were shown which stimulated a short discussion among participants.

Presentation of the first project: TRAMP – Transnational mobility of elderly people

This extraordinary project was presented by **Juergen Lange** from the organization Work and Life (Arbeit und Leben, Germany). It shows how sometimes even unlikely situations are possible if people who do not at all share a common language find one by a common cultural feature: namely crafts. The partners were ASCR from Prague, which mostly gathers women working on puppetry, BAGSO – Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Senioren Organisationen from Bonn, *Culture et Liberté International* from Paris, Ruhr-University Bochum and deGEFAS (Association for promoting gerontology) from Graz, Czech University of Life Science from Prague and l'Util Homme (which comprises 70 organizations across France which organize crafts seminars for senior citizens in France). The TRAMP project consisted of 16 sub-projects (like e.g. building bridges or creating playgrounds with swings for children, beach volleyball arenas, intercultural cooking seminars, and the likes). The biggest success of this 2-years project surely lies in the fact that it brought together about 100 elderly people with no foreign language skills, who successfully communicated through work on these 16 sub-projects. However, naturally, some young people joined the elderly co-citizens, served as interpreters, but also acquired different working skills in applied crafts. This product-oriented approach counterbalanced the participants' language imbalances by working together for a common purpose. The intergenerational approach helped elderly citizens to foster friendships and acquaintances in their local communities. The transnational and trans-local approach, therefore connecting various localities all over Europe, helped promoting better understanding and it certainly promulgated the importance of a common value of WORK. In other words, a working culture was such a strong common denominator that the lack of language skills lost its significance. Transnational dialogue through craft-oriented group-work was successfully achieved.

The project was carried out through a kick-off meeting, workshops, working groups on transfer conferences and four exchange programmes among the Czech Republic, France and Germany.

Presentation of the second project: IMPULSE – Inter-Generational development to promote social perspectives in Niederlausitz

This project was presented by **Ulrich Dovermann** (Federal Agency for Civic Education, Germany) and **Christian Pfeffer-Hoffmann** (Institute for Education in the Information Society, Germany). This three-years project is carried out in the South-Eastern part of the German federal state of Brandenburg and is financed by the European Social Fund and the Federal Agency for Civic Education. Both Mr Hoffmann and Mr Dovermann emphasized the objectives of the project, which is to find ways and methods to change violent-supportive regional structures. The groups targeted are regional NGOs, juveniles and local businesses. The special attention during presentation was paid to the role played by different ethnic minorities in the region, whose legacies and heritage could play an important role in future business development. One of the aims of the project is to stimulate models of presentations (e.g. fashion shows) where these local ethnic values are inscribed and literally woven into the textiles, which again could represent fashionable designs for a wider use. This could surely lead to mutual acknowledgement of value systems in the region.

Discussion

After the presentations of the project, Mrs Roesing skillfully moderated the discussion, the conclusions of which are briefly summarized in the final paragraph of this report.

Conclusion

We express our thanks to a succinct input based on a completed scientific research by Julia Franz from the University Erlangen-Nuernberg (Germany) and the presentations of two extraordinarily interesting projects, which have been dealing with intergenerational and trans-local cooperation. Through committed and meticulous moderation, the workshop was very successful in terms of putting forward some conclusions and responding to the posed questions.

Considering the question framed during the workshop itself, the responses would be the following: intergenerational and local projects put societies in motion, increase individual responsibilities and foster bottom-up developmental models.

As concerning the two questions, which were incorporated as the central theme, steering the discourse of the whole conference, during this workshop participants agreed that:

Contributions of cultural and citizenship education and especially the role of professional educators in this particular field of intergenerational and local projects can vary from coordination, facilitating, consulting, mediating, mirroring, of course researching, but also creating an *agent provocateur*, an agent to ask questions which otherwise would never be posed either in that particular local community or in society in general. Naturally, those roles do not necessarily have to be taken over by professional educationists, but also by members of the community in which the project is carried out.

The main challenges could lie in the field of preventing and managing conflicts among and within various groups, in know-how when it comes to raising funds and handling budgets, raising awareness of different contexts, trying to establish cross-over working environments while thinking of various organizations with sometimes divergent structures and working cultures; the challenge could also lie in the field of quality management and evaluation.

It would be recommendable to set standards of plausible actions, therefore not to be overly ambitious while setting too grandiose goals.