

# NEWSLETTER 10

June 2014

## Intergenerational learning

### Why is intergenerational learning important ?

As noted by the TOY Project Consortium<sup>1</sup> the benefits of intergenerational learning have been documented in a number of studies and those listed in the 2012 *Welsh Local Government Association and Beth Johnson Foundation* report are those most frequently cited:

*Sharing people's skills, experiences, achievements and talents to achieve mutual benefits; enhancing self-esteem and reducing exclusion for individuals and communities, changing negative perceptions of older and younger people; increasing the participation of people in life long learning; engaging more people in employment, education and training; enhancing active citizenship across generations; helping people feel safer by promoting greater understanding between generations; increasing physical and mental health and wellbeing; creating neighbourhoods that help people to age well; helping to understand the reasons for people's*

*behaviour, helping to make new contacts with people of different generations.*

Intergenerational learning is slowly establishing itself as a new interdisciplinary area of study and policy area, as demonstrated by the European Union (EU) decision to dedicate 2012 as European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations. Further evidence is the publication of a dedicated journal on the topic, the *Journal of intergenerational relationships*; the work of European networks and projects such as all those co-funded by the EU *Grundtvig* programme over the past years<sup>2</sup>, a growing number of database of handbooks and compilations of intergenerational practice.

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<sup>1</sup> TOY, *Together Young and Old* (2013) - *Intergenerational learning involving young children and older people*, Leiden.

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<sup>2</sup> Among them: TEEA – *The Civil Society Organization in Bulgaria and Romania: On the Way Towards a Europe for All Ages*; RIVER, *Recognition of intergenerational volunteering experiences and results*; ENIL, *European network of intergenerational learning* and EMIL, *European map of intergenerational learning*; with best practises documented by AGE Platform Europe on [www.age-platform.eu/age-policy-work/solidarity-between-generations/best-practices/1099-best-practice-intergenerational-solidarity](http://www.age-platform.eu/age-policy-work/solidarity-between-generations/best-practices/1099-best-practice-intergenerational-solidarity)

The emergence of the concept of *age-friendly communities* has also generated interest in intergenerational learning at local government level, being recognized as a valuable contribution towards sustainable communities and inclusive public spaces closely matching local governments' priorities, such as social inclusion, citizenship and community development.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, the European Commission has recognized *intergenerational mobility* as one of the knowledge requirements for economic development.<sup>4</sup>

## **Categorising intergenerational practice**

Considerable attention in the literature has been paid to categorising intergenerational practice according to their forms, functions and learning areas. Brown and Ohsako (2003) discuss a typology of interactions between the elderly and the young comprising:

- Older adults serving children and youth (as tutors, mentors; resource persons, coaches and friends, grandparents raising grandchildren).

- Children and young people serving older people (as friendly visitors, companions and tutors).
- Older people and young people collaborating in services to the community (e.g. Environmental and community development projects).
- Older people, young people and children together engaging themselves in informal learning activities, recreation, leisure and sports events or art festivals and exhibitions.

The 2012 ENIL *Intergenerational learning and active ageing* report also categorises the different types of activities involved in intergenerational learning according to distinct principles which may overlap:

- Friendly and informal social encounters.
- Transfer of experiences, knowledge, know-how and memories.
- Mutual creations (artistic, cultural or others).
- Active solidarity towards those in difficulty, living together.

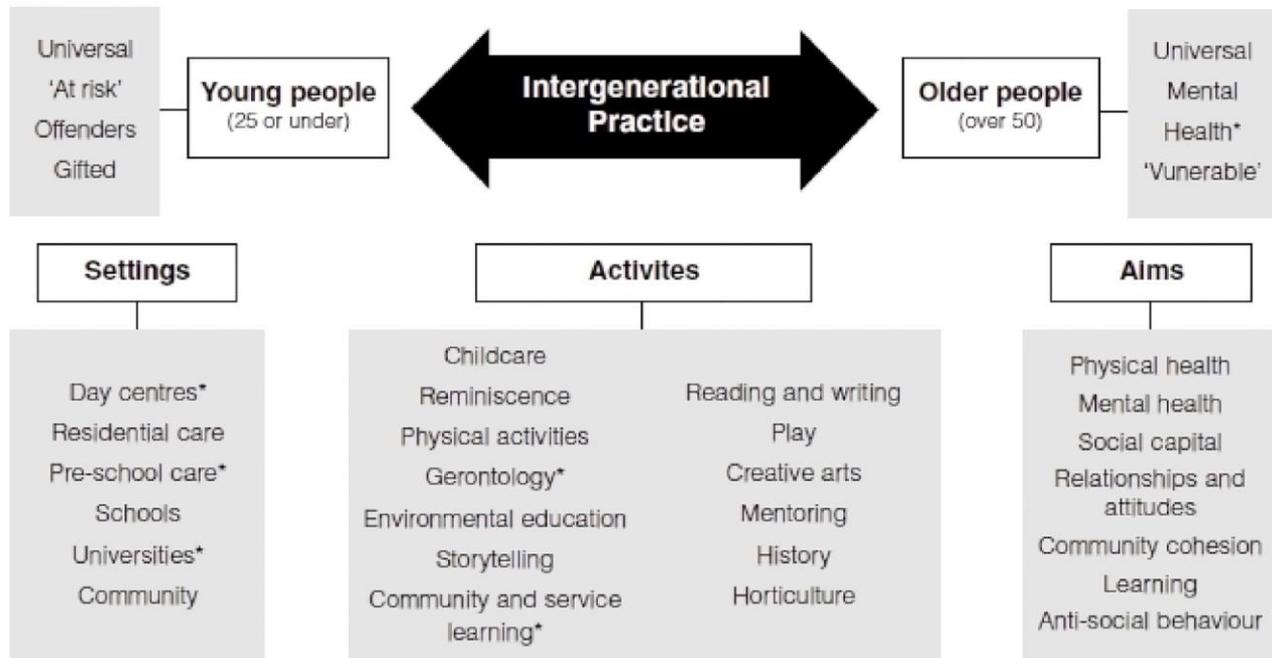
Springate et al. (2008) provide a comprehensive model of intergenerational practice which reflects the diversity of participants, settings, activities and aims of

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<sup>3</sup> Interesting in this respect is the recent ENIL's *Intergenerational Learning Cities* conference held on 16-18 October 2013 in Cuenca, Spain.

<sup>4</sup> *European higher education in the world – COM* (2013) 499 final – 11.07.2013

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\* denotes that examples are mainly international, not UK.

intergenerational practice. It is reproduced in the figure above.<sup>5</sup>

**2014 – 2020**

Intergenerational learning will be offered additional tools and funding through the new EU programmes. *Erasmus+* in the first place, with two specific adult learning programme strands:

1. **Cooperation between institutions or organisations**<sup>6</sup>, supporting adult

education institutions and organisations to exchange new practices in areas of common interest, develop new approaches, and improve quality.

2. The **Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe**,<sup>7</sup> an upcoming online space to exchange, showcase, and promote methods of good practice in adult education, **scheduled to come online in late 2014**.

But also *Europe for citizens*<sup>8</sup>, is intended to

<sup>5</sup> Iain Springate, Mary Atkinson and Kerry Martin  
*Intergenerational practice: a review of the literature*  
<http://www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/publications/lig01/lig01.pdf> p4

<sup>6</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/opportunities/adult-learning/coop-inst-org\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/opportunities/adult-learning/coop-inst-org_en.htm)

<sup>7</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/opportunities/adult-learning/epale\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/opportunities/adult-learning/epale_en.htm)

<sup>8</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/about-the-europe-for-citizens-programme/future-programme-2014-2020/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/about-the-europe-for-citizens-programme/future-programme-2014-2020/index_en.htm)

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encourage the democratic and civic

participation of citizens at Union level, by developing citizens' understanding of the Union policy making-process and promoting opportunities for societal engagement and volunteering at Union level and specific territorial cooperation schemes, like the *Central Baltic Programme*.<sup>9</sup> National 2014-2020 development strategies should also be considered, as in the case of the Slovenian strategy, in which intergenerational support is one of the priorities towards an inclusive society.<sup>10</sup>

### The open questions

- The need for an overall systematic post funding assessment of intergenerational learning projects co-funded by *Grundtvig*. This would help steer towards the most needed directions those to be supported through *Erasmus+*.
- Similarly, in order to better orient future activities, we also need to

record what impact intergenerational learning has with specific sectors - policy makers, educators, health and welfare in later life agencies and services, older learners themselves and academic communities.

- Based on available data intergenerational learning has been interpreted mostly as social inclusion, much less as active citizenship, which, given the lack of identification by European citizens with European institutions, appears a growing priority
- There needs to be an assessment of any work which creates (transferrable) processes for intergenerational work rather than concentrating on particular groups?
- What national, regional policies can we all point to which would help others, to give them leverage in their lobbying and negotiations?

Sergio Andreas, Lunaria

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.centralbaltic.eu/2014-2020>

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.mgrt.gov.si/en/areas\\_of\\_work/eu\\_cohe\\_sion\\_policy/development\\_planning\\_and\\_program\\_ming\\_of\\_strategic\\_and\\_implementing\\_documents/slovenias\\_development\\_strategy\\_2014\\_2020\\_sds\\_2014\\_2020/](http://www.mgrt.gov.si/en/areas_of_work/eu_cohe_sion_policy/development_planning_and_program_ming_of_strategic_and_implementing_documents/slovenias_development_strategy_2014_2020_sds_2014_2020/)