



ForAge 3rd annual report 2014

What is ForAge?

The ForAge project is a European multilateral network which aims to raise recognition of the value of learning for older people in increasing happiness and health and well-being, and in fostering inclusion, participation and solidarity between generations. The full title is *ForAge for later-life learning . building on European Experience* (reference: 518459- LLP-1-2011-1-UK-GRUNDTVIG-GNW). In short, the purpose of ForAge is to share information and best practice about laterlife learning and the benefits it brings. It raises issues such as the availability of learning for older people and access to it. The network builds upon rich experiences from European projects and initiatives and elsewhere, by analysing their value and impact and disseminating information about them.

Why have we created ForAge?

Since the 1993 European Year of Older People and Intergenerational Solidarity there have been a great many pan- European exchanges, projects, training events, seminars, programmes and networks concerned with learning in later life. The Grundtvig programme provided impetus and funding for imaginative and innovative work across all of Europe. In 2012, 11 of the 61 funded multilateral projects benefited older learners. Too often it is difficult to gain information about these EU initiatives or even to find any comprehensive list of them. It seems clear that the best use has not been made of all these rich experiences, to build on them, share information, harness research evidence, and analyse and assess their value and impact on education and ageing policies. We need networks to do this and to enable us to draw on pan-European evidence which shows the benefits of later-life learning.

Target audience

The ForAge project involves five communities of users:

- (1) policy and decision makers in national, regional and local government
- (2) organisations, education providers, teachers and trainers in the field of later-life learning
- (3) agencies promoting a better quality of life for older people, involved in e.g. social inclusion, active and healthy ageing, volunteering, intergenerational engage-ment; (4) older learners;
- (5) academic and research communities in this field.

What have we done?

DATABASE

The ForAge database provides details, links, examples and summaries of information and analyses about later-life learning (<http://www.foragenetwork.eu>). The categories which are used – including policy, research evidence, evaluations, statistical surveys, theory and practice, and EU Projects – are designed to facilitate searching and analysis.

WEBSITE

The website includes background to the project, newsletters, news on later-life learning and presentations from ForAge conference and activities. ForAge also has its own Forum to promote online discussion. In addition, there are home pages for the partners where they can place relevant national, regional and European information in their own languages. The website also provides links to other organisations and relevant sites (<http://www.foragenetwork.eu>).

LEXICON

The ForAge Lexicon was published in January 2015 after a lot of work by the partnership. It contains definitions of 110 key terms and, in many cases, comments on their usage in discussions of later-life learning. It can be found at the [website](#).

RAISING ISSUES OF INTEREST AND CONCERN

The ForAge network has drawn on the partners' expertise and contacts to investigate issues and raise questions of concern in later-life learning. The results of this work have appeared in newsletters and in workshops, have informed contacts with policy makers and opinion leaders, and have featured in conferences and discussions with other organisations and agencies. The issues have covered a wide variety of topics, including: education and older people who have experienced conflict in their lives; the new Erasmus+ programme and older people; intergenerational learning; online later-life learning; older people and art; older people and cinema; older people as 'non' learners; active and healthy ageing; minority ethnic, migrant, refugee and Roma communities and laterlife learning; gender issues and giving older people a voice through learning.

CONFERENCES

The network has organised three pan-European ForAge conferences. In 2012 the ForAge conference took place in Limassol, Cyprus, on the theme *A Society for All Ages: Learning to Live and Learning for Life*. A year later the conference was in Budapest, Hungary, on *The Future of Learning for Older People in Europe: Learning from Experience*. In November 2014, the ForAge conference and consultation took place in Porto, Portugal, on the theme *New Directions and New Learning in Later Life*. This event enabled the network to share ideas and information and stimulate debates around the issues ForAge has prioritised. The agenda also included information about later-life learning in Portugal with an important contribution from the Minister of Solidarity, Employment and Social Security. There were also significant contributions from the ForAge partners AidLearn and RUTIS who helped to organise the conference.

FACEBOOK

The ForAge network has a Facebook page which promotes the network and aids dissemination and communication.

CONSULTATION

The ForAge network has gathered information about issues, policies, data, research and examples of good practice. Partners have contacted their own national and regional governments about issues relevant to later-life learning and have been in touch with other pan-European networks, initiatives, projects and programmes to develop effective collaboration. The network has used the online discussion forum and workshops at conferences to promote consultation, raise issues and obtain information:

<http://www.foragenetwork.eu/en/forum/>

NEWSLETTERS

The ForAge newsletters focus on progress that the network has made and on particular issues in later-life learning. So far 14 newsletters have been published and they can be found on the website: <http://www.foragenetwork.eu/en/page/123-forage-network-newsletters/>

LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

The network plans to maintain various facilities and activities beyond the end of its funded phase. It has created a Declaration in Support of ForAge which enables other organisations and individuals to sign up to support the principles of the network and to remain in contact. The Declaration can be found on the website.

Exploring more issues

The funding for the ForAge project is drawing to an end, but the network is still working on a number of activities and issues, such as the following:

• Collection and analysis of data on participation in later-life learning

It remains difficult to make substantive judgements about the extent of older people's participation in later-life learning in Europe. The main source of information is Eurostat but many European countries do not collect relevant data. There are issues about the comparability of figures from different countries, with government departments and others using different age groupings – and in some instances limiting later-life data to age 65+ only.

• Results of the ForAge survey on contemporary later-life learning

A web-based survey undertaken in the autumn and winter of 2014 produced some interesting information which ForAge plans to release in 2015.

• Health and well-being

The ForAge network is well placed to liaise and collaborate with other networks and initiatives attempting to promote healthy and active ageing. Education and learning are not always viewed as essential elements of work in this area and ForAge is committed to make better connections with such initiatives.

- **European English**

English has become a common language for communication within many pan-European projects. It is also learned by many older people. ForAge is aiming to produce a discussion document in the Spring of 2015 about European English and its use in the Europe.

ForAge going forwards

The project comes to the end of its funded phase on 31 March 2015 but that will not be the end of ForAge. It plans to continue to be a useful and informative network with the database and website accessible for everyone to use. One ForAge partner, the Association for Education and Ageing (AEA) in the United Kingdom, has resolved to maintain and develop the key features of the ForAge project including the database. Partners in the ForAge network also aspire to do the following:

- Organise appropriate events –nationally, regionally and across Europe in partnership with other agencies that promote later life learning. The AEA and ForAge have organised a conference for 23–24 September 2015 at the Open University, Milton Keynes (UK) looking at *Learning in Later Life: Research, Theory, Policy and Practice*. More details will be available on both organisations' websites.
- Raise issues as and when required.
- Liaise with and inform appropriate departments and agencies at all levels about relevant later-life learning issues.
- Collaborate with other EU-wide networks and agencies that promote ageing, older people and educational issues.
- Develop and extend the ForAge membership to ease access to information and expertise.
- Organise appropriate training activities, such as that currently available through our Cyprus associate. The details are shown on the next page and any interested parties who have secured Erasmus+ funding are encouraged to sign up to the course. They should use the CEAE PIC number.

ForAge and you

There are lots of things everyone can do to get involved with the ForAge network and its activities. To start with, you can join the network – go to the ForAge website (www.foragenetwork.eu) and sign the Declaration of support and provide a link to our website on your own webpage. Sign up for the forthcoming AEA/ForAge conference in September 2015. You can also do the following:

- Follow one or more of our current discussions
- Raise new issues of concern on the ForAge Forum
- Invite ForAge partners to speak at your events
- Attend our training activities
- Participate in the next European conference in September 2015
- Complete the current survey
- Submit information for the database
- Disseminate ForAge information to other people and agencies you feel would and should be interested

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